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# C L A U D I A .

BY

MRS. FREDERICK PRIDEAUX.

"It is old and plain."

TWELFTH NIGHT.

L O N D O N :

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# C L A U D I A .

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## P A R T I .

THE unrelenting summer sun of Rome  
Poured from the zenith,—not a line of shade  
Edged the white streets,—when Brân, a British prince,  
The son of Llyr, the sire of Caradoc,  
Sat wrapped in sadness at Narcissus' gate :  
Narcissus, freedman and chief favourite  
Of Claudioſus Cæſar.

For when Llyr, the king  
Of the fierce tribe that held the Cymric coast  
North of the tawny channel which receives  
The rivers of the west, had passed away,  
His son, the patient, many-thoughted Brân,

Searching his spirit, could not find the skill  
To rule their turbulence in times of war.  
Though brave like all his sires, the noble prince  
Was minded otherwise. He could not hear  
The trumpets of ambition : they were drowned  
By a still voice which drew him from the midst  
Of evil men, to stand above the world  
And wait the dawning of a better day.  
Wherefore, withdrawing from the sovereignty,  
He left it in the hands of Caradoc,  
His younger son ; the elder prince had fallen  
In Llyr's last battle with the Roman power,  
Led on by Aulus Plantius. For himself,  
He passed, a willing exile, from the court  
Of grey Tre'rân ; and crossed the tawny sea,  
The Summer-country, and the Deep-valed Land ;  
And paused not, save for needful rest and food,  
Till in the centre of the granite horn  
That pierces far into the unknown seas  
He found the solitude his soul desired  
And grew alive again.

But Caradoc,  
Whose giant heart sent out a pulse which throbbed  
On to the farthest limits of his sway,

Aroused the fiercee Silures, and reknit  
The old alliance with the North and West,  
Till as one man the Cymrie sovereignties  
Rose on the rash invaders of the world,  
And thrust them eastward from the Sabren's brink,  
And for nine glorious years with desperate arms  
Held them at bay. But as stern winter treads  
Close on the heels of autumn, flushed and full,  
So did disaster follow victory.

Ere the ninth year had closed, Ostorius,—  
Whose firmer hand now led the alien powers,  
While Plantins in ovation entered Rome,—  
Vanquished the dwindled forces of the king,  
Who, trusting in a traitress, was betrayed,  
And sent a trophy to imperial Rome.

A splendid gem set round with precious stones,  
His queen, his brothers, and his only child.

Then all the pageant-loving city thronged  
About his steps, eager to feast their eyes  
Upon this marvellous barbarian,  
Who for a half-score of astonished years  
Defied the arms that had defied the world.  
And now the vast procession wound along  
The shouting streets to where, without the walls,

The sun flashed hotly on the glittering arms  
Of the prætorian bands that lined the fields,  
And clustered thickly round the imperial thrones  
Of Agrippina and of Claudius.

First came the followers of the captive king,  
Dejected and ashamed ; and with them, borne  
On polished ears, the trophies of his wars :  
Rich golden torques and amber necklaces  
Won in a hundred fights. Then as these passed,  
The noisy rapture, rending all the air,  
Swept on from street to street, but followed still  
By awe-struck murmurs : for behind the ears  
The royal captives dragged their weary limbs,  
Heavy with gilded chains : and last of all,  
With eye unquenched and an unfettered air  
That mocked his bonds, came Caradoc the king.  
Now when they reached the throne of Claudius  
All but the king debased themselves to kneel  
In shameful supplication for their lives.  
But as for him, he stood erect and spoke  
Kingly and soldierly, as speaks a man  
Unto his fellow : lifting all the while  
His hand in fitting cadence to his words  
As easily as if the ponderous chain

Were a light wreath. Then his majestic air,—  
His words of unadorned, unboastful truth,—  
Went to such heart as Cæsar still possessed :  
So that a spark of nobleness revived  
Within him ; and much marvelling to himself  
What this might mean, but conscious of a sense  
Of unaccustomed light and warmth, resigned  
His soul to the strange pleasure, and decreed  
Life and free pardon to the king, his queen,  
His princely brothers, and his only child,  
Eirgen, the gold-bright princess.

So they dwelt  
As prisoners in a house assigned to them,  
A splendid palace on the Palatine,  
Or what seemed such to unaccustomed eyes.  
And though the tooth of secret anguish gnawed  
The heart of Caradoc, he bore his pangs  
In silence ; while his feebler kindred sank  
Beneath their smaller griefs and filled the halls  
With loud laments. And he and all his kin,  
He in stern silence, they with loud laments,  
He with a drowning sense of vaster woes,  
They cooped in narrow thoughts of narrow things,  
Pined in that glowing city of the South

For Britain's mist-wreathed hills and varied skies ;  
Though lodged and served right nobly, as became  
Such noble captives, pined for liberty ;  
Pined for the freedom of the rustic court  
Held by Silurian kings in grey Tre'rân,  
Beside Dunraven's wood-entufted hill.

Now when the tidings of that dark defeat  
And darker treachery reached the ears of Brân,  
Far in the bleak wilds of the granite horn,  
They shook him to the centre. He arose  
And, nerved to action by the sudden stress,  
Disguised his prineely aspect in the weeds  
Of a poor mendicant ; then, staff in hand,  
Retraced his steps across the Land of Vales,  
The garden of the west ; and crossed once more  
The Summer-country and the tawny sea.  
So after weary days that grew to weeks  
Before the toilsome pilgrimage was done,  
Came to the silent halls of grey Tre'rân.  
There lost in tearless grief he paced along  
The grass-grown roadway to the ruined gate,  
Once all alive with loyal multitudes.  
And thence through desolate spaees, wherein once  
The noblest druids, bards, and warriors

Met in high council round their nobler king.  
He wandered on, still lost in tearless grief.  
So through the banquet-hall, where oftentimes  
The noise of feast and dance and merriment  
Had made the walls and roof-tree ring again,  
He passed in tearless grief. But when at length  
He reached the inner chamber, once the home  
Where Caradoc the husband, son, and sire  
Forgot to be a soldier and a king,  
He bowed his hoary head and wept his fill.  
But soon the eager thirst of grief for grief  
Made him uplift his eyes and gaze around  
On all that was and was not, till at length  
That pain was slowly quenched with greater pain.

Then rose the prince to seek the inland hills,  
Where dwelt within a secret woodland hut  
Cadair, his faithful hind, from whom he learned  
That all was over true; Siluria  
Lay as a vassal province at the feet  
Of the world's ruler; Caradoc, betrayed,  
Was borne in triumph as a thrall to Rome,  
The hateful city.

But it came to pass,  
As each successive note of misery

Fell on his ears and sank into his heart,  
He grew the stronger. For his soul, drawn back  
From her vast wanderings through the confused worlds  
Of space and speculation, centred home,  
And mustered all her forces for the field  
Of actual and inevitable life.

Nor many days had passed, or ere, once more  
In sordid weeds arrayed, he took his way  
To Venta by the coast, and finding there  
A vessel bound for Gaul, set sail in her,  
And through the Gallie forests and flat lands  
Passed with unflinching foot until he reached  
The broad Rhodane, whose barges carried him  
To rich Massilia's many-masted port.  
Thence rudely tossed on the Tyrrhenian waves,  
He came to Ostia, and at length to Rome.  
And clad in all his native dignity,  
Which like a rich and ample robe of state  
Concealed the mean and travel-stained attire  
That hung upon his stately form, he stood  
In Cæsar's presence and besought of him  
That Caradoc his heir, the chosen chief  
Of all the Cymri, might return in peace  
To Britain, while that he, his sire, remained

In Rome, a hostage for his fealty.  
And Claudius seemed to listen to his suit  
With favouring ears ; but many vexing forms  
Hung on the wheels of action, and required  
Hard proofs of most plain things. Till on a day  
In the imperial presence sire and son  
Met without warning ; and their mighty love,  
Like a swollen torrent rising, bore them on  
Into each other's arms with bursting sobs  
Of joy and grief that could not be controlled,  
And so the proof was plain to all the world.  
Then Cæsar,—thinking thus to pacify  
The wrathful people of the Western isles,  
Who held his legions still at bay, or else  
Out of a mere infirmity of will,—  
Granted the prince's prayer, or seemed to grant.  
But the court favourites, greedy for a bribe,  
Hampered the prince's business ; and the king  
Remained a captive still ; and his sire's heart  
Grew sick with hope deferred from day to day.

Thus then it was that Brân, a British prince,  
The son of Llyr, the sire of Caradoc,  
Sat wrapped in sadness at Narcissus' gate.

And as he waited on the favourite,

Worn out with long delays, and still denied  
By scornful menials, a stranger passed :  
An aged man, who pausing near him made  
Obeisance as the Easterns make and said,

“ O prince,—for all men know thou art a prince  
From the far isle of Britain,—I beseech thee  
Pardon thy servant. All my heart is moved  
To see thee watch thus patiently in vain,  
Day after day, year after year, to win  
An audience of Narcissus. Verily  
A tythe of all this thankless service paid  
Unto the King of kings, would purchase thee  
More fruitful hearing.”

“ Nay, thou knowest not,”  
Brân answered him, full courteously, but yet  
With just a touch of coldness in the tone ;  
For though most patient of his own disgrace  
It galled his heart to think his fallen estate  
Should cast a slur on Britain, being linked  
E'en by a casual comment with her name.

“ At my first coming I had audience  
Of him thou rightly call'st the King of kings,  
Though such he be not rightfully. Yea more,  
Cæsar allowed my suit. But none the less

The business lingers, in the greedy hands  
Of this Narcissus ; wherefore I besiege  
His still reluctant doors."

Then said the man,  
" Pardon ! my lord, my words were over-dark  
And failed to show my meaning. Know, O prince,  
I spake not of imperial Claudius ;  
But of the Lord of heaven and earth, Who reigns  
From everlasting on to evermore.  
In Whose vast hand the kings and emperors  
Are pliant tools, Whose palace-doors stand wide  
In every place, Whose kingdom is a home  
For sorrowing exiles scattered through the world."

At that the languid eyelids of the prince  
Were lifted suddenly, as if the words  
Had touched a secret in his breast.

" Yea, true,  
I missed thy meaning, friend ; yet none the less  
That meaning was the meaning of my life  
Until misfortune drove me from the calm  
Of meditation in the Cymric wilds,  
And led me to this vile tumultuous place,  
This seething caldron filled to the hissing brim  
With cruelty and luxury. Here all thoughts

Save those of indignation and despair  
 Have died within me. Yet how long I watched  
 Those heavenly palace-doors ! but never once  
 Did any streak of light show them ajar,  
 Nor any voice reply."

“ Yet God has heard,”  
 Broke in the stranger—“ yea, and answered too,  
 Though thou hast thought Him deaf to thy desire.  
 He drew thee from the empty, voiceless wilds,  
 From that close gazing on the inner dark  
 Which burns the aching eye-balls of the soul,  
 But never pierces to the light beyond.  
 His hand has brought thee hither ; here, in Rome,  
 His servant waits to lead thee to His feet.”

He ceased ; and Brân was silent for a space  
 As if he gathered up the golden words  
 And told them over. Then he rose from off  
 The clients' sordid bench, girded his robe,  
 Turned from Narcissus' door, and made as though  
 He would have joined the stranger, saying,—

“ Friend,  
 'Tis well a man should know with whom he speaks.  
 Therefore I will not hide that I am Brân,  
 The son of Llyr, the sire of Caradoc,

Fain to become a hostage for my son.

Who then art thou?"

" My name is Julius,"

The stranger answered in an altered voice,

Saddened by nameless memories and regrets,—

" A name of little note or novelty.

Born of the Hebrew race in Lydia,

But disallowed by all my kin and creed

For this strange crime ; that when our God vouchsafed

To grant us our desire, to hear the prayer

Which swelled for ages Judah's yearning heart,

I would not slight His gift—no less a gift

Than that Deliverer sought by kings and seers,

And found at last in Christ of Nazareth.

Wherefore, cast out by all, I came to Rome ;

Where I have dwelt three years. Many are here

Of mine own nation, driven as I have been,

From kindred, home, and country, for His sake

Who bore worse things for ours, O prince, and thine.

Others, the sons and daughters of the land,

Are joined with us. Some of great houses : more

Of the plebeian stock, but most of all

Of the disheartened slaves. Among the first

Is one of whom thou hast heard in other days,

Pomponia, wife of Aulus Plautius,  
The general who aforetime held command  
In Britain, ere the days when Caradoc  
Rose in his strength."

"Yea ! yea !" replied the prince,  
"I have heard men speak of her. A lady wrapt  
In most mysterious woe, who never changed  
Her mourning robe, whose hair was white with snow  
That fell in summer. Some averred her grief  
Grew from her childless state ; but others said  
That sorrow for a dear friend put to death  
Because her beauty vexed the wicked eyes  
Of Messalina, gnawed upon her still.  
However this might be, thus much was clear,—  
That she was stricken to the hopeless heart.  
Yet though so stricken that all the tears she had  
Seemed but too few for her own misery,  
She spared full many a precious drop for ours.  
Many a captive owed his rescued life  
To her kind pleadings. Many a trembling town  
Was spared the cruel rifling of the troops  
At her entreaties. Yet the veterans,  
Though muttering curses on the general,  
Had not a threat for her ; so sweet, so pure,

Were all her manners towards them."

" 'Tis most true,"

The old man answered, as with laboured breath  
He overtook the eager-striding prince ;  
Who, stirred as was his custom by the thought  
Of generous natures and their gentle deeds,  
Forgot his new companion in the theme.

— " Pomponia was all and more than all  
That thou hast said ; and since those days the Lord  
Has had compassion on her, drawing her  
Close to Himself ; and has moreover blessed her  
With a fair daughter, born in Britain, one  
As wise as she is fair ; yet no less meek,—  
O ! meeker far ! and far more tractable  
Than softer natures ; with a heart at one  
With God in all things." —

So the old man spoke  
And sighed in speaking, as a father sighs,  
Who numbers up the lovely qualities  
Of a dear, dying child. And then he paused,  
And when he spoke again, his words recurred  
To the first theme :—

" It seems Pomponia's grief  
Grew from a deeper root than childlessness ;

For though less wild and bitter than in days  
Of heathen gloom, it hangs about her still,  
And mars perchance the meaning of her life  
To her impatient lord."

" All this I heard  
By common rumour," said the prince, " and more  
Was told me by my faithful herdsman's wife,  
The daughter of a servant of our house ;  
Who, taken captive as a little maid,  
Had served Pomponia many happy years  
Within the alien camp, set free by her  
When she returned to Rome. Estrildis spake  
Of some new worship, pure and spiritual  
Beyond all other worships of the world,  
Which her dear lady practised, and the which  
Herself had learned to love. A worship paid,  
By a new life of holy thoughts and deeds  
And solemn prayers and praises, to one God,  
Revealed in him of whom thou spak'st anon,  
Jesus the Christ ; but wherefore called the Christ,  
I know not."

Then the other was not slow  
To answer fittingly, with words that met  
The faithful witness in the prince's soul,

And ended thus :—

“ This faith whereof I speak  
Is no new thing, but eldest born of all :  
The truth whereof the rest are counterfeits.  
These base their shadowy fabrics on the sands,  
The shifting conscience of the varying race,  
Whereon arise, to glitter for a day,  
Frail shrines of worship paid to fancied powers :  
Shrines open only to a favoured few.  
This, like a city founded on a rock,—  
The home of generations passed away,  
The home of generations yet to come,—  
Rests on the deep foundations of the past,  
The solid substance of the storied years  
That slowly settle from the thoughts of God.  
And in her temple-courts and round about  
Her fragrant altars, all the tribes of men ;—  
The Greek, the Jew ; the unshorn, the civilized :  
The bond, the free ; the simple, and the sage ;—  
Are welcome ; and her choicest mysteries  
She opens to the meekest of the earth.”

Thus speaking, Julius led the thoughtful prince ;  
Leaving the broad streets and the dazzling domes ;  
The temples, columns, statues ; leaving too

The flowery, fragrant gardens ; till they came  
By ever-narrowing ways to Julius' home :  
A humble lodging by the Tiber's side ;  
Whose waters, ever rushing by the wall,  
Subdued the strife and clangour of the town.

And here with quiet modesty, unspoiled  
By any false shame for his mean abode,  
He bade the prince be welcome, while he spread  
His best upon the board. Then, after meat,  
They sat and talked until the air grew dim :  
Until the lights on the opposing shore  
Streamed out their long reflections on the stream :  
Until a glory never to be quenched  
Broke on the soul of Brám.

At length he rose  
And laid his arms about the old man's neck,  
In kind farewell, and passed into the street.  
And threading now the ever-widening ways,  
Through less and less of sordid on to more  
And ever more of sumptuous, he reached  
The temples and the palaces again,  
Where columns, arches, statues, stood aloft  
In glittering moonlight, amidst gardens sunk  
In depths of fragrant shade. Yet every step,

From that poor chamber by the river side  
Towards this central splendour, seemed to him  
To bear him farther from magnificence  
Nearer to meanness. And when last he reached  
The palace on the Palatine, assigned  
By Claudius to the royal hostages,  
The small and plaintive questions of the queen,  
The wife of Caradoc his son,—whose heart,  
Loving, but ever fretful in its love,  
Misgave her, that his lingering meant mishap  
To her or her's or him,—fell on his ears,  
Though seasoned to such sounds, as something strange,  
Something most needless and most pitiful.  
For were not all his goings and returns  
Guarded divinely? was not every thread  
Of all the tangled interests of his house  
Held smooth by hands kinder than kindest hands  
Of fabled fate? And yet he answered her  
With meeker patience than his wont (thongh Brân  
Was ever famed for patience); for his soul  
Had risen into the higher calm which stills  
All angry pulses. Thus his prayer was heard;  
And thus his eyes, long faithful in the dark,  
Found at the last they had not watched in vain.

Soon as the morning broke the prince arose  
Alert and strong, as if a second youth  
Quicken'd his veins ; and through the silent streets  
He bent his steps again to Julius' home.

There scarcely had he entered and received  
The old man's welcome, when a hurried knock  
Startled the door, which opening instantly,  
Ere Julius could reply,—a fair young girl,—  
Half child, half woman,—all her delicate face  
Flushing with eagerness, all her features strung  
To some set purpose,—sprang into the room.  
Her bearing had a wild and sylvan grace  
That seemed most strange in one whose raiment spoke  
Of noble lineage. For her tunic, woven  
Of finest Syrian wool, bleached by the dews  
Of summer nights upon the emerald plains  
That frame Damascus, was all bordered round  
With Tyrian purple ; and was looped above  
On each fair shoulder with a gleaming pearl,  
Large as a linnet's egg ; and over this  
Hung loosely draped about her slender form  
A robe of equal richness ; and her hair,—  
Crisp, golden hair that ran in rippled waves  
Back from her rounded temples,—flowed behind

Into a silken network, strung as thick  
With pearls as autumn gossamers with dew ;  
Her very feet, that trod the homely floor  
With such a dainty firmness, were encased  
In shoes of creamy kid skin, rough with pearls.

No sooner was her hasty entrance made  
Than seeing Brân, she started and drew back  
Half timidly ; yet with her gaze still fixed  
Upon his face, with a child's look of keen  
Unconscious scrutiny.

“ Fear not, my child,”  
Said Julius, rising with a tremulous haste  
And laying softly on her sunny head  
One wrinkled hand in blessing ; while she kissed  
Its fellow, lifting it up reverently  
With her long fingers. “ Fear not, Claudia,  
This stranger will not harm thee, nor betray  
Thy coming.”

Then he turned him to the prince,  
Saying,—“ This maid is she of whom I spake :  
The child of Plautius and Pomponia.”  
And Brân kept gazing on her tender face  
As if it held a mystery ; while he heard,  
As in a dream, the voice of Julius say,

“ Alas ! my daughter, wherefore art thou come ?  
For though my banished heart yearns after thee,  
Dear one, as well thou knowest, none the less  
I tremble that thou thus shouldst disobey  
Thy sire’s commandment.”

“ Nay, my master dear,”  
Answered the maiden, with a sudden flash  
Of indignation,—“ never adjure me more  
By any father’s claim from Plautius.  
He never gave me any father’s love,  
Only a mockery of a father’s pride.  
And now I know it ;—my dim guess is true :  
Plautius is not my father ; nay no more  
The sire of Claudio than this stranger here  
Is Claudio’s grandsire.”

“ Peace, my child,” in haste  
Julius broke in. “ I charge thee, listen not  
To this slaves’ gossip.”

“ Nay, my father dear,”  
She answered, tempering her passionate voice  
To meekness, “ only hear, and thou wilt own  
That this is no slaves’ gossip. Yesternight,  
Pomponia,—she whom I will ever call  
My mother ; who has won the name by more

Than mother's love and mother's sorrow too :—  
Thrown from her gnard by grief that Plautius  
Refused her prayer to bear me company  
At a gay festival, wherein she knew  
I should be sore bested,—let fall a word  
Which told me that my guess had touched the truth.  
No : I am not their child."

“ Even were this so,”

Said Julius, striving to discern the right,  
Yet baffled still, so that his words became  
Feeble and void of faith :—“ He is thy sire  
In the law's sight, and thou art bound to heed  
All his commands. Unless that he command  
To disobey thy God. Then, not till then,  
The bond gives way before the greater bond.  
But let that pass : surely thou hast not braved  
His anger, merely thus to tell me this,  
That thou art not his child ? ”

“ Nay, surely nay,”

She answered with a pretty shamefaced smile,  
Which faded quickly, as her features took  
An air of settled purpose once again,  
“ I come to warn thee of a fearful snare.  
Alas ! my father, never, never more

Can any dear occasion come to me . . .  
Of disobeying Plautius for thy sake.  
Or rather for His dear sake Whose thou art,  
And Whom thou servest ; Whose I also am  
And Whom I fain would serve. Listen to me,  
And little Claudia like the fabled mouse  
May free the lion from the hunter's toils.  
Before thou camest to Rome, four years ago,  
The emperor, incensed by rebel deeds  
Of certain lawless Jews, and with his fears  
Wrought on by favourites, issued a decree  
That every Jew and every proselyte  
Should quit the city and the lands of Rome.  
I was a child and scarcely read aright  
The meaning of their grief ; but as I looked  
From our high palace windows on the bands  
Of plundered exiles hastening to the gates,  
And saw the sorrow and dismay that sat  
On every face, I wept aloud with them,  
And angered Plautius. With them went, they say,  
Many who owned the Christ and worshipped Him.  
Now since those days, amidst the cruel strifes  
And ever-growing licence of the times,  
This old decree against your tribe has fallen

Into forgetfulness. And some have crept  
Back to their homes ; and others, knowing not  
Of such a law, have come to Rome from far,  
As thou, my father. So for a brief while  
All has seemed safe. But now the courtiers,  
Sated with softer wickedness and fain  
To try the taste of blood, have plied the ears  
Of the dull emperor with a false report  
Of some conspiracy among your tribe.  
This very night, at sunset, all your homes  
Will be beset and every soul be slain.  
Such is their fiendish scheme.

“ But God is good ;  
And yesternight I, forced by Plautius  
To join this banquet, overheard them talk ;  
Such talk as eurdled up my blood to hear.  
But oh, what fervent thanks flew from my heart  
Up to the Lord Almighty, who refused  
My prayer to save me from that riotous scene  
That He might grant my greater prayer : to save  
Thee, O my father, and thy people too  
From the fell heathen.”

Here her voicee gave way  
And suddenly, before she was aware,

Changed to a sob ; but pressing her fair hands  
 Hard on her heaving breast, she wrestled down  
 The rising passion, calmed herself, and stood  
 As meek before him as a three years' child,  
 Waiting his answer. But he, all amazed  
 By this unlooked-for stroke, and tossed about  
 By many currents of suggestion,  
 Kept troubled silence.

Then he thought :—“ P perchance,—  
 Nay doubtless,—they have played upon her fears ;  
 For this thing cannot be : ” then spake aloud,  
 “ Tell me, my child, their very words and looks.  
 Who spoke the first ? who followed ? ”

“ I will tell  
 As clearly and as truly as I can,”  
 She answered him, and girt her eager soul  
 With patience ;—“ but, my father, while we speak  
 The precious moments fly, moments at most  
 Too few to spread the warning.

“ Thus it was :—  
 Last night, as I have said, did Plautius feast  
 Three of his chosen friends, mere boys to him ;  
 For lately he has seemed to honour such  
 More than his grey compeers. One of the three

Was Martialis, of the Spanish race,  
Of a most witty and most wanton tongue,  
For ever stringing all things in the world  
On slender threads of epigram. With him  
Came his compatriot and fellow poet,  
Lucanus ; of a grave and modest mien,  
But with an eye to shrink from. And the third  
Was Pudens, of the order of the knights."

Now when she named that name the maiden blushed  
And faltered for a moment ; at the which  
The old man sighed, as at a token fraught  
With danger to his darling.

Then Prince Brán

Discerning that his presence checked her speech,  
Arose and stood apart a little space  
Beside a windowed opening in the wall ;  
And, looking on the stream, his busy thoughts  
Flowed faster than the current of the stream.

"Thus, ever thus," he mused, "the tide of life  
Flows on without a pause. Scarce have I met  
The man of all the world who meets my soul,—  
Who has the message ready on his lips  
Which I have listened for so long in vain, —  
Ere the remorseless current sweeping on

Bears him beyond my reach. But if the tale  
The maiden tells be true, and he must quit  
This murderous city,—whither shall he go?—  
Ay, wherefore not to Britain? Many ears,  
Half opened by the wisdom of the bards,  
Await the message there, and many souls  
Are sick to death of sin. Ay, let him go.”  
So mused the prince, watching the stream. Meanwhile  
The maiden meekly stood by Julius  
With folded hands, as if her mind were set  
To say a weary task. And thus she spake:—  
“ And Plautius commanded me to bid  
Four ladies to the feast, daughters of four  
Of the great houses. So they came in state.  
Haughty and vain they looked ; their scented locks  
Made the air heavy, and their gorgeous robes  
Trailed on the floor, tangling my feet, whereat  
They frowned as if the injury were theirs.  
O how my heart longed for Pomponia,  
My only mother, to be near me then ;  
I felt so shelterless and so alone.  
But she was shut by Plautius’ stern command  
Within a distant chamber ; never since  
That dreadful day when she was tried by all

Her gathered kindred, tried for life and fame,—  
Save in his presence, may I speak with her.  
I will not weary thee, telling the talk  
That wearied me. At length the purple folds  
That hung between us and the central hall  
Were drawn aside by slaves, all crowned with flowers,  
Revealing us to Plautius and his guests ;  
Who greeted us full courteously, and begged  
Of Plautius that the banquet might be graced  
By our fair presence. So we passed along  
To supper, marshalled by the bowing slaves.  
My four companions soon reclined at ease  
Beside the youths upon the couches placed  
Around the board ; but Plautius, kind for once,  
With some rough joke about my childish ways  
Bade me be seated at his feet. Four hours,  
Four endless hours, the feast crept slowly on  
From costly course to course, with frivolous talk  
And wanton songs between ; and ever more  
When in these wanton songs there came a line  
More dull, or more unmeaning than the rest,  
It seemed to take the hearers' fancy most.  
And then at every pause,—wine, wine, still wine.  
Of every varied vintage of the South,

Flowing at every turn ; until at length  
These high-born women, most unwomanly,  
Grew flushed and looked so strangely with their eyes  
It vexed my soul to see them. And methinks  
That Pudens read my discontent, and wished  
To shield it by a pretext from the eyes  
Of Plautius, lest he should be angered by it :  
For with a smiling face he turned and said,  
‘ Thy gentle daughter, sir, is scarcely ripe  
For these late feasts. See ! sleep hangs in her eyes,’  
And would have spoken more ;—but Plautius  
Rose on his elbow with a sudden rage  
Glaring upon me, as my furtive looks  
Glanced towards the door, so much I longed to fly,—  
And whispered fiercely in my startled ear,—  
‘ Beware ! for any rash discourtesy  
To me or to my guests shall be repaid  
With bloody interest to thy baseborn friends,  
Julius and all his tribe.’

“ And these his words  
Were caught by the quick ears of Julia  
Who lay beside him on the lower couch ;  
For straight she lisped to him, while all the time  
Her cruel smiles flashed sideways at my face,

‘ Ah, my good lord, by this same hour to-morrow  
Thy threat to Claudia will have lost its point ;  
For not a soul of all her chosen friends,  
Search where thou wilt, will then be found alive,  
To suffer thy just vengeance.’

“ ‘ How ? what meanest thou ? ’

Said Plautius sternly. ‘ Claudius has no heart  
To plan a sweeping clearance such as this,  
Without the prompting of his favourites,  
Without the knowledge of his generals,  
And naught has reached my ears.’

“ ‘ May be, my lord,’

She answered ; ‘ for he fears to tell it thee,  
Lest it should leak abroad ; for all the world  
Knows that the ladies of thy house are pledged  
To these vile Hebrews.’

“ At that Plautius’ brow

Grew sterner still—‘ Be careful of thy tongue,’  
He muttered, ‘ speaking of my wife and child : ’  
Then louder, ‘ Tell me how it came to pass.’

“ ‘ Most easily,’ she answered with a laugh.  
‘ We of the court were weary of our lives  
For want of some new zest. This Agrippina  
Weighs on us all like lead :—no life—no play—

But a mere plodding merchant, counting gains  
Of power from week to week. Her predecessor  
Perchance did carry things a little far,  
At least she was imprudent. But the court  
Was twenty times more lively in her time ;  
Or so they say,—of course the thing is far  
Beyond *my* memory’—

“ —here inadvertently  
Fanning her false face with an ostrich plume  
On which the slaves had sprinkled essences,  
The moistened feather swept the red away  
From half her withered cheek. But knowing not,  
She babbled on :—

“ ‘Of course the thing is far  
Beyond *my* memory, being a mere child  
When Messalina fell. But as I said,  
We all were fit to die of weariness,  
And therefore planned a pleasant tragedy  
To stir our blood. We told the emperor  
That his decree of exile ’gainst the Jews  
Was disregarded, many had returned,  
And some had never gone ; and all were bound  
With the house-slaves in a conspiracy,  
Spread like a network underneath our feet

Throughout the length and breadth of Rome, to rise  
And slaughter him and his and all of us,  
And overthrow the empire.'

“ Here she paused  
To lift the wine-cup to her lips, and then  
I heard Lucanus whisper under breath  
To Martialis,—

“ ‘ Curse the woman’s tongue !  
Spoiling our sport ! now Claudia without doubt  
Will warn the game.’

“ But Julia did not hear  
Or did not heed,—

“ ‘ Anything in the world,—  
So she went on, ‘ the merest lumber, placed  
Upon the groove of fear, slides swift and sure  
Into the brain of Claudius. Thus, you see,  
Our little tragedy was soon arranged.

Those of the actors who had need to learn  
Their parts are well instructed ;—for the rest,  
Theirs will be better played in ignorance.’

And here she laughed again, and glanced at me  
In cruel triumph :—adding, ‘ As I said,  
By this same hour to-morrow not a soul  
Of pretty Claudia’s strangely chosen friends

Will be forthcoming. Sunset is the time  
Given to the guards.' "

Here Claudia ceased and drew  
A choking breath. And Julius said, "Enough,"  
And rose up quickly, while with shaking hands  
He girt his robe :—“Enough, O God ! I see  
The fearful tale is over true ;—but how  
Hast thou escaped to tell it ? ”

“ I scarce know,  
Myself,” she answered : “ Thanks to Him whose hand  
Guides the most stubborn evils to good ends,  
As wilder waxed the revel, Plautius ceased  
To note me further ;—so I ventured forth  
And found the fresh morn breaking purely down  
Through the sky-centre of the outer hall.  
Then with my faithful nurse, who waits without,  
I left the palace. But the time flies on ;  
And thou must hasten forth from house to house  
To warn thy people. I too must be gone.  
But, O ! it almost breaks my heart to think  
That I may never see thy face again,  
Nor hear thy voice. The lessons of the Lord  
May come to me, I know, by other lips,  
Or even be taught in silence ; yet I fear

They will seem hard, and I shall grow perverse,  
And fail to learn them. Ah ! thou knowest not  
What hateful snares are spread about my feet.  
And, O my father,—scorn not thy poor child—  
The worst is this ; they do not always seem  
Hateful to all my heart. O lift me up  
On thy strong hands of prayer,—as thou would'st lift  
A drowning creature from the weltering waves ! ”

Then Julius wrung her hands and wept aloud :  
And bade her trust in God and watch her heart  
As she would watch a treacherous enemy ;  
And bade her stay her soul upon the thought  
That the kind Christ was near her evermore,  
That when the foe pressed closest, He would be  
Yet closer. So with many sighs and tears  
And prayers, they parted. But or ere she passed  
Through the dark door, she turned, and stood therein  
Like a fair statue in a gloomy niche.  
Her face subdued into a solemn calm  
While all her form dilated with the thought  
That swelled her soul. And Brân who had stepped  
forth  
To give her salutation ere she went  
Heard her last words :

“ My father, ere I go,  
Not knowing what betides me where I go,  
I have a last request to make of thee :  
Grant it as thou would’st grant it, were it made  
By dying lips, sealed by beseeching looks  
In dying eyes. Thou knowest I was born  
In Britain : doubtless of the British race.  
I treasure many a dim remembrance still  
Of fair green meadows, russet forest-paths,  
And cooler skies than these ; and looks of love  
That hung above my cradle, ere I dwelt  
With Plautius and Pomponia in the camp.  
Voices and visions haunt me in the night  
Re-echoed from some far-off place and time.  
My heart is bound so close to that dear land  
That all her woes are mine, and make me feel  
As if my mother wept and cried to me,  
Calling across the melancholy seas.  
But I—I cannot answer or return.  
Wilt not thou go, my father ? when thou camest  
From Lydia’s shore, thy course was like the sun  
From east to west ; and now that thou art driven  
From hence, be like the gracious sun once more :  
Still further westward bear the blessed light,

Even to the islands of the utmost sea,—  
To Britain. 'Tis my last request. Farewell."

So she passed out, not waiting for reply ;  
While Brân took up his staff to follow her,  
Saying to Julius, " Hearken to her words.  
For be assured the wisdom of the gods,  
The wisdom of the God of gods is there.  
The thoughts she uttered were the very thoughts  
That held me as I watched the rolling stream.  
I go to guard her steps, unseen by her ;  
For by this time the city is abroad,  
And dangers may beset her. There's a look  
In her deep violet eyes that brings to mind  
One whom I lost long since, my eldest born,  
Slain in the last fight of my sire, King Llyr.  
Ere noon I will return."

And so the prince

Departed, following Claudia and the nurse  
At distance silently. At first it seemed  
A needless care ; for every street was still  
And empty ; scarce a shutter was withdrawn  
In all the lazy city. Here and there  
A swarthy peasant, singing merrily,  
Bound for the market-place with fruits and flowers,

From some green-nested hamlet in the hills,—  
Would pass them, check his song, and turn to gaze  
At Claudia's beauty, only half concealed  
By her light veil ;—then shake his simple head  
In sad rebuke, and go upon his way,  
With careful thoughts about his girls at home.

But as they neared the house of Plautius  
A band of drunken revellers noisily  
Burst from Narcissus' palace-gates hard by,  
Ready and ripe for mischief; and forthwith  
They, seeing Claudia, but through wine-dulled eyes,  
That saw not she was Claudia, with a shout  
Reeled after her and caught her by the veil.  
Whereat she flung it off, and stood erect,  
Like an indignant queen, and cried aloud,—  
“ Stand back! Methinks ye know not who I am.”  
At which they stared upon her, and two fled,  
Muttering, “ By Venus' eyelids, 'tis the child  
Of the old general, Plautius. Let us begone ! ”  
While other two, past reason, mad with wine,  
Pressed hard upon her and the shrieking nurse.  
But ere their vile hands touched her—for the nurse  
Had thrust her 'gainst the wall, and stood before,  
To guard her darling, as the wild cat guards

Her young one,—Brân was on them unawares.  
His vigorous age had left his sinews sound.  
He would not honour them, such dogs as these,  
With buffets of his princely hand ; but wound  
A long, strong arm about the waist of each,  
And tore them up and hurled them to the earth  
Without a word ; and left them grovelling there  
Like trodden worms.

Then Claudia, who had held  
Her head so high in peril, voice so firm,  
Finding the peril safely overpast,  
Trembled like any leaf, ready to swoon ;  
And dared not speak her thanks, lest the great sobs  
That struggled in her throat should reach her lips.  
Therefore, she only lifted grateful eyes  
Upon the aged prince, who took her hand,  
And led her gently to her father's door.  
There parted from her, saying, “ My fair child,  
I heard thee speak anon to Julius  
Of that dear island whose dishonoured name  
I cannot breathe in Rome. And thou didst speak  
As if thou lovest it : therefore, let this love  
Be henceforth as a bond between us two.  
I love that dear land next to my own soul,

And hate her foes next to the evil powers.  
Should any rumour reach thy father's ears  
Of this encounter, tell him that Prince Brân,  
The son of Llyr, the sire of Caradoc,  
Has now avenged himself and all his house  
Upon him, rescuing his only child."

So turned and went ; while she, with grateful eyes  
Shining upon him through her unfallen tears,  
Stood on the topmost marble step and watched  
His stately form diminish and grow pale  
Along the lessening street.

Meanwhile the slave  
Who kept the gate—one with her in the faith,  
And guessing of her mission by the talk  
That passed among his fellows yesternight,—  
Brought by a secret signal from the nurse,  
Gave them safe entrance ;—saying, as she passed,  
" Christ's blessing rest upon thy golden head,  
Dear lady, dearest child ;—and as to-night  
Thou hast braved many perils for the sake  
Of those He loves, so through the darker night  
That stretches on until He shine again  
In everlasting morning on the world,—  
May His good angels have a charge to keep

Thy tender feet in all their doubtful ways.''

So with the blessing of the poor and meek  
Warm at her heart, she passed into the house ;  
And sought her little chamber, where she fell  
Upon her knees before the unseen Shrine  
That faithful hearts find everywhere ; and strove  
In wordless agonies of prayer ; and poured  
Her soul in praise for rescue, safe return,  
And a new friend. At length, arising up  
With looks of full contentment, like a babe  
Slow-turning from his mother's liberal breast,—  
Summoned the nurse and gladly laid aside  
Her festal draperies and ornaments.

Then, clad in simple homespun, sat her down,  
Distaff in hand,—and thought within herself,  
" Here will I sit and spin and sing the while,  
And through the open window shall my song  
Rise to Pomponia in her lonely room.

Which does she love the best ? Methinks it is  
That pretty little song that Seneca,  
Prince Nero's tutor, made for me last year,  
When I lamented for the good old times.

For though the heathen gods are named in it,  
'Tis sure an innocent song ; and I can think.

Stead of Minerva, of the mighty One  
Named in the sacred books of Julius,  
The everlasting Wisdom, whom of old,  
In the beginning of His wondrous ways,  
The Lord, the God of heaven and earth, possessed.  
And where the words fall short of revealed truths  
In these last favoured days, my inward thought,  
Can shoot beyond them to a better aim.”  
And so she sat and span and sung the while.

“ Set within the gorgeous gloom  
Of a purple-linéd room,  
Like a jewel in its case,  
Pearly robes and pearly face,  
And all along a cushioned couch reclined at ease,  
Mused Valeria fair and young,  
Sadly mused and sadly sung.  
‘ Oh ! I would my lot were cast  
In the grand days that are past ;  
Their nobler manners better far my fancy please :  
When the matrons of old Rome  
Wrought amidst their maids at home ;  
When their distaffs, deftly twirled,  
Span the conquest of the world.’

So she sang a little space ;  
But the meaning of her face  
Grew all dim and drowsy soon,  
With the languid afternoon :  
Her eyelids drooped with slumber and the music died.

Then, the while she slept, behold  
A Minerva, wrought in gold,  
Seemed to leave the silver shrine  
Freshly served with flowers and wine,  
And floated without footsteps slowly to her side.

There, dilated large and fair,  
Breathed these words upon the air :—  
‘ Let thy distaff, deftly twirled,  
Spin the conquest of the world.’

“ ‘ Lo ! thy favoured hands are full  
Of a softer, whiter wool  
Than the gods have e'er before  
Lavished from their boundless store.

Rise ! spin a finer thread to clothe a daintier age.  
Let the father, husband, son,  
Shine in raiment thou hast spun :  
Self-denial, purity,  
Learned at home and learned of thee,  
So shall they pass with plaudits from the widened stage.

Spin them girdles broad and fine :  
Truth and justice learned from thine.  
So thy distaff, deftly twirled,  
Spins the conquest of the world.' "

Now, as she sang, and after through the day,  
While with a habit half mechanical,  
She went about her daily ministries,—  
Those unobserved achievements, which if left  
Undone, would ruin all the house with wrong,—  
Though well persuaded that the fear was vain,  
A dreadful fear would seize her suddenly ;  
So that her heart stopped beating, and she longed  
To rush into the streets and cry aloud,  
To warn the chosen people of the doom  
That waited them at sunset. Yet, again,  
Knowing that what was laid on her to do  
She had done faithfully ; she calmed herself  
And left the issue in the unseen Hand.

While thus she lived her anxious hours at home,  
Prince Brân and Julius went abroad through all  
The dazzling length and breadth of Rome, and  
urged  
The Jews to instant flight. Then all the few,  
Who owned that Jesus was the Christ, arose

And fled with haste by twos and threes, and left  
The bloody city, by all gates. Some hid  
In the disguise of peasants. Some with wares  
As travelling merchants. Here a brave man, pierc'd  
To the heart's quick with agonizing fears  
For those more dear to him than life itself,  
Attired his face with harsh, tyrannic looks,  
Driving his trembling wife and babes before,  
As a slave dealer. So, by God's good hand,  
Some in disguise, some openly, they passed  
In safety. While the unbelieving Jews,  
Judging the heart of Julius by their own,  
Would heed no warning given by such as he ;  
Who cast their old traditions to the winds,  
And in a fashion, new, heretical,  
Worshipped their fathers' God. These loudly praised  
Their own sharp wit that saw his subtle aim  
To dispossess them of the synagogue :  
Shut all their gates upon him, stayed behind,  
And perished miserably.

Yet one of these,  
Aristobulus, of the royal race  
Of Maccabæus, listened and believed.  
And bore his dark-eyed Miriam and their babes

On some pretext of summer holiday,  
In a gay pleasure-galley down the stream  
To Ostia, where his favourite villa stood  
On a green island southward of the port.

Now as the galley glided down the stream,  
It passed the humble lodging by the shore  
Where Julius dwelt ; and through the window came  
The mournful chanting of a Hebrew psalm.

“ Deliver me, my God ! deliver me  
From those that rise against me.” And the throng  
Of full-toned vowels rolling down the air  
Melted the proud heart of the Maccabee  
To thoughts of brotherhood ; so giving charge  
To steer the galley to the wall, he bade  
The rowers pause ; then standing at full height,  
He called aloud—

“ O man of God ! come down.

The sun is low already, and the gates  
Are far for weary limbs. Come down and speed  
With us to Ostia.” And Julius heard.  
As weary to the death with the long toil  
Of that most mournful day, and sick at heart  
To think how many of his stiffnecked race  
Refused to flee,—he slowly moved about,

Filling his scrip, preparing to depart ;  
But almost praying that his feet might fail  
To bear him forth : so much to be desired  
Seemed a quick entrance into life, though won  
By the most cruel death. But when he heard  
This friendly voice that in the Hebrew tongue  
Called from the river, all his mind was changed  
And opened kindly to the nearer warmth.  
Therefore he looked forth gratefully and knew  
The Maccabee, and swift-descending came  
On board the galley.

Now when they had rowed  
Two furlongs' length beyond the city walls,  
The ominous sun sank down as red as blood,  
Behind a black-barred vapour far to sea.  
The crimson on the ripples faded out ;  
The flush upon the cloudlets overhead  
Died in a moment ; and the fiery glow  
That lit the city's smoky canopy  
Went out in darkness, as the light goes out  
From an extinguished torch. Then at that sign,  
Without a word, the rowers ceased their strokes  
And pale with dreadful expectation stayed  
The drifting galley on the ashy stream,

With backward oars. While all on board of her  
Listened in breathless silence.

Soon, too soon,  
The noise of sudden tumult shook the air,  
Borne down the echoing water. Mocking shouts,  
Shrieks of despair, and rush of rapid feet  
In timid flight or fierce pursuit ; and cries  
For mercy, shortened by the cruel sword ;  
All these were there, and all by distance blent  
To ghastly harmony ; but not a clash  
Of meeting weapons : for the slaughter fell  
Upon defenceless households, gathering  
For evening prayer. Then Miriam clasped her babes  
So closely to her straining breast, they woke  
And wailed aloud ; and at the tender sound  
Her dry-eyed horror melted into tears.  
But Julius and the noble Maccabee  
Flung themselves prostrate on the deck and cried  
Within their stricken hearts—“ How long, O Lord !  
“ How long, shall bloody and unrighteous men  
Afflict thy heritage ? ”

At last the fear  
Of overtaking night compelled them on :  
The oars fell sadly in the darkening stream,

And bore them downwards to the port, and thence  
To the green island.

There did Julius dwell  
For many days, preaching to all the house  
That Jesus was the Christ. His noble host  
Heard him in troubled silence for a while,  
Distracted by strange thoughts ; then suddenly  
A light shone round his spirit, like the light  
That flashed on Saul of Tarsus ; and a face  
Looked forth upon him from the spirit-sphere  
That bathes us all about, and smote him down  
With sudden splendour to the earth, and turned  
The purpose of his life.

Then, fired with zeal  
To spread the conquests of the Crucified,  
He sailed with Julius for the land to which  
The last request of Claudia pointed them :  
The island of the West, beloved by Bran.  
But ere they sailed, they both adventured them  
To Rome once more, finding a safe retreat  
Within the palace on the Palatine,  
Where dwelt the British captives. For the guard,  
Won by the noble bearing of the king  
And of the prince his father, and some bound

By common faith to Brân, were slow to vex  
Their royal charge by prying in their ways ;  
And for the most part closed their ears and eyes  
To such as came and went. So these two men  
Dwelt safely in the palace, practising  
The Cymric customs and the Cymric tongue.  
And in those days Brân and the Maccabee  
Passed through the mystic waters, and received  
The holy symbols of the feast of Christ.  
And ere the pilgrims parted, Caradoc,  
Though caring little for their faith, became  
Their fast and fervent friend ; and when they went,  
Gave them his signet ring : a talisman  
Potent to charm the eyes and win the hearts  
Of all the Cymri.

So at length they sailed  
For the far West, ordained by holy hands ;  
While Claudia's ceaseless prayers smoothed all their  
paths  
Over strange lands and seas. Meanwhile the snares  
Grew thicker round her feet. For Plautius,  
Having betrothed her in her earliest years  
To Pudens of the order of the knights  
(Whom Claudia would not, since he scorned her God),

Strove by all means, or fair or foul, to bend  
Her holy purpose to his heathen will.  
Therefore she dwelt in sorrow and in fear  
Almost alone ; or, worse than loneliness,  
Compassed by vain companions. When at times  
She saw Pomponia at the daily board,  
Speech was forbidden them. Thus, but for One  
Who still is nearest to the loneliest,  
Her heart had almost broken, or her steps  
Had well-nigh slipped. And Julius mourned for her  
As one who mourns an only, darling child,  
Dying unsuccoured on a distant shore.



## P A R T II.

THEY sailed from Ostia, whence their galley, vexed  
By varying fortunes of the autumn seas,  
Coasted the Tuscan and Ligurian shores,  
Far as Massilia's many-masted port.  
Thence in rude barges slowly toiling up  
The broad Rhodanus, after many days  
They reached the heart of Gaul ; and so at length  
By weary marches through dim forest tracts  
And wide monotony of grassy plains,—  
With here and there a vineyard trellising  
The sunny slopes,—they gained the Liger's banks,  
Whose westering current bore them to the coast,  
Washed by the waters of the unknown sea.

Here, after brief delay, they found a ship  
Bound for Siluria with a freight of bards  
From Carnâk on the upper coast : of old  
A vast Druidic Temple of the Sun,  
Winding its serpent-train o'er hill and dale ;  
But now, when all the Druids of the land  
Were banished by the Roman, only used  
For lyrie tourneys.

Therefore in this bark  
Did Julius and the noble Maceabee  
Take shipping ; and for many stormy days  
Coasting by Gaul, then beating slow across  
The channel currents, hardly reached at length  
The headlands of the hornèd land. From whence,  
Doubling the granite capes, the vessel turned  
With favouring winds along the tawny sea.  
So, gently borne between the Cymrie hills,  
At moonset on the seventh night she gained  
The offing of the old Silurian port,  
And dropped her anchors, waiting for the day.

Now, as it chanced, at earliest dawn a chief,  
Cynfrân by name, was passing on the cliffs,  
And paused to watch with melancholy eyes  
The breaking of the day. He saw the sun

At first peer dimly through the mists that hid  
The sleeping sea. He saw the sea by slow  
And soft degrees shake off the steely hues  
Of the cold dawn, while diamond sparkles flashed,  
Faded and flashed again, on rippled lines.  
Then broader levels shone with steadier beams,  
And wet rocks glittered. Last, the brooding mist  
Spread its grey wings and fled, and all the bay  
Langhed to the laughing sky. At which the chief  
But looked more sad, as one who says within,  
" Day follows night for all the world but me,  
And sunrise drinks the tears of all save me."

As thus he gazed and mused, a distant hail  
Came sliding on the surface of the sea,  
Small as a voice that whispers close at hand ;  
Then hearing this, he rested on his spear,  
Searching the clouded margin of the bay  
With falcon eyes. And soon he spied far off  
A shining speck, which, as the horizon cleared,  
Became a vessel anchored motionless  
Above her painted image, waiting there  
For pilotage. But when he saw the bark,  
Whose gilded prow spoke her an alien,  
And saw too how with such an arrogant ease

She sat upon the subject bay, his brows  
Met in black wrath.

“ O, for a thousand arms ! ”

He cried aloud,—unconscious of the swell  
Of his barbaric phrase, shaking his spear,—  
“ To hurl without a pause their vengeful darts  
Full in the insolent invader’s face.

Alas ! Siluria’s bravest hearts are cold,  
Fallen are her heroes, and their mangled limbs  
Lie heaped in hasty graves beside the shores  
Of the sad Sabren, mourning night and day  
In oozy channels, which the ocean tides  
Flush to o’erflowing with unneedful tears.

Our Caradoc, betrayed by treacherous hands,  
Now bows his head, stripped of its royal wreath  
Beneath a dungeon-roof far off in Rome,  
The hateful, envious city.—What of this ?  
It is not this which gnaws me to the heart :  
And I but mock myself, feigning to chafe  
At general woes. The over-crowded griefs  
That fill the land with groans are trifles, weighed  
With that one voiceless woe which slaughtered  
thee,  
O Angharad, my only love ! Even now

The Cymri may shake off the alien yoke,  
Our Caradoc may yet again be king,  
But not the gods themselves can right thy wrongs.  
Yet though gods cannot right them, I, a man,  
May well avenge them ; and through many a year  
Have I avenged them well, and better yet  
Will I avenge them ere this day be done."

At that the chieftain turned his course and dropped  
Upon the levels of the western marsh  
By stealthy paths.

Meanwhile upon the prow  
Gathered an eager group of voyagers  
To watch the clearing coast. And all unmarked  
Among them stood the pilgrims : simple men  
Encumbered by no shows of power, but yet  
Bearing a seed whose overmastering growth  
Should fill the world. In bardic legends still  
Their names survive, but changed by lapse of years  
To *Ilid* and *Arwystrli*, barbarous sounds  
That strive to copy in the Cymric tongue  
The graceful Greek. As Julius gazed he grew  
Silent with many thoughts amidst the hum  
Of eager voices. For as one by one  
The features of the land revealed themselves,

He travelled back a thousand storied years,  
And saw the splendid king, King Solomon,  
On Israel's throne. He saw the ships of Tyre  
Cross the Great Sea and thread the pillared straits,  
And plunging thence athwart the unknown deeps  
That wash the utmost border of the world,  
Turn their bold prows to face the stormy North,  
Seeking the metals of these distant isles  
Wherewith to deck the temple. There his thought  
Dwelt for a moment, ere with swift recoil,  
Like a spent wave, it swallowed up itself  
In musings on the miserable change  
Since those proud times. And then as a white cliff  
Gleamed from a sombre headland, swathed in mist,  
A thrill ran through him, and a passing flush  
Kindled the worn lines of his thoughtful face ;  
For in that snow-white cliff his fancy found  
Claudia all clad in pureness ; in its feet,  
Fast rooted in the waves, her lonely faith  
Standing in no calm waters like to these,  
But in an ever-seething, stormy sea  
Of fierce temptation ; yet still building up  
A rampart of inviolable prayers  
Around her fellows and the land she loved.

As thus he mused, with glittering eyes full fixed  
Upon the nearing shore, the Maecabee  
Marvelled what ailed the man. For Julius thought  
His thoughts in silence ; silence known as well  
To calmly tender friendships of the soul  
As to her passionate loves. For who that feels  
The fine, delightful sense of oneness thrill  
His raptured heart, and is not loth to trust  
The ears of casual comrades with the rare  
And precious treasure of a friend's deserts ?  
Who is not jealous of the thing he loves,  
And prone to hide it in a seeret place,  
And tremble when another passes near ?

But while the Maccabee was marvelling,  
The bards had left the tent upon the deck,—  
Where through the voyage they had held themselves  
Aloof from common contact,—and now stood  
Shoulder to shoulder with the gazing crowd.  
And seeing this, and being one who loved  
Rather to speak than ponder, being too  
Full charged with that gregarious warmth of heart  
Which gushes now in streams of graciousness  
And now outpours itself in vials of wrath ;—  
And being therefore prone, as such are prone,

To seize occasion by the throat and claim  
An instant payment of success,—he turned  
To speak with them ; and chiefly with a youth  
Who wore a many-coloured robe and held  
A wand as gaily-tinted, while a harp  
Hung on his drooping shoulder. To this youth  
The Maccabee began to give himself  
In question and reply. Until the youth,  
Being courteous and perchance a little vain,  
Opened his heart in answer, telling him  
He was a novice in the Sacred Schools,  
Slow-training in the unwritten Druid-lore.  
Told him, moreover, Llarian was his name ;  
That all the strength of all his soul was vowed  
To wisdom and to beauty ; that each sense  
And every inward faculty wherewith  
The unseen Powers had blessed him, he had bent  
To disentwine the master-key that rings  
Through all the discords and the harmonies  
Of nature and of man, and, having found,  
To tune his life therewith in just accord  
And utter forth that life in choicest song.  
And then with many flourishes and shows,  
But still a march of steady purpose heard

Behind them all, he spoke with kindling eyes  
Of the three golden requisites of song.—  
“ Eye that sees nature, heart that feels her power,  
And resolution that dares follow her : ”  
Moreover how he trusted all were his  
And to be proved ere long. For sternest tasks  
To Llarian’s young pride and ardour seemed  
Most easy. As a little tender child,—  
Full softly shod, bearing a fairy sword  
Of harmless wood,—slips from his mother’s sight,  
Resolved to fathom out the mysteries  
Of the great world beyond his father’s field ;  
To slay all giants and disperse the spells  
Of all enchanters, doubting not his power.

He told, moreover, how he journeyed now  
From Carnák and the contest of the bards  
To Mona’s sacred island, in the train  
Of the most reverend bard of all the bards,  
Golden-tongued Idwal, whose melodious songs  
In the good times of Caradoc the king  
Were smoother than the smoothest stream that  
glides  
Through grassy levels of the lowland plains ;  
But now in these last miserable days

They grew more rugged. And it might be too—,  
Or so at least the fickle multitude  
Began to whisper,—that this ruggedness  
Concealed a waning vigour in the strain.  
But for himself,—Idwal was Idwal still,  
Without a rival.

As thus Llarian spoke  
His looks reposed in loving reverence  
On him of whom he spake, who stood apart,  
Beside the foremast. In his lean right hand,  
Brown as a leafless branch against the blue  
Of April skies, he held an azure staff.  
The left with a repellent gesture crushed  
His robe against his heart. Far down his breast  
A beard as white and crisp as a cascade  
Seized by a sudden frost, flowed motionless.

But now the shout that Cynfrân heard had  
drawn  
An answer from the shore. A dusky speck  
Was seen to dance amid the whitening surf  
That rose and fell in silence on the rocks  
Far off. And as they watched the speck it grew  
Into a sailing bird. But nearer still  
Became the pilot's slight canoe in which

He sat at ease, facing the silver wake  
He left behind him on the pliant sea.  
Stroke after stroke he flung the waves behind,  
Gathering the distance in his arms. And soon,  
Closing beside the bark, he climbed aboard ;  
While the crew shouted welcome, and besieged  
His ears with eager questions as he passed  
To take the helm. Then at the master's word  
With measured cries the busy sailors spread  
The weather-beaten sails, and plied the oars  
That fringed the curving sides. Two paces back,  
Two paces forward, the strong rowers strode  
In even time upon the groaning deck.

While thus the bark, inspired with sudden life,  
Shot swiftly to the shore, the Maccabee,  
Turned upon Llarian with exultant looks,  
Saying—

“ I pray thee, add thy harp's sweet tones  
To the melodious plashing of the oars,  
And the shrill crying of these white-winged birds  
That wheel and hover round the nearing cliffs.  
For now the dangers of the sea and land  
Are over, over too the long delay  
Betwixt resolve and action. For I too

Have my resolve, young stranger. It is this.  
To spend my life henceforth among your tribe,  
Teaching the worship of the living God,  
Who in the ears of Israel has breathed  
The master-key that governs all His works,  
And rings through all their music. Now the hour  
Is come at length, and therefore my glad soul  
Exults within me. All the world is full  
Of the renown of your heroic songs;  
Fain would I hear one."

“ Nay, forgive me then,”  
Llarian replied with chilly loftiness ;  
“ How shall my shallow youth presume to sing  
When Idwal, bard of bards, the silver-haired,  
Stands by in silence ? And for thy resolve,  
Most liberal stranger, to impart to us  
The overflowings of thy wisdom,—know  
That all the highest wisdom of the Greeks  
Came from our shores. The long-haired Samian  
Whose golden verses still entrance the world,  
The sage of sages, learned them at the feet  
Of our Abāris, in those hoary times  
When Rome was yet a meagre colony  
Of squalid, ignorant outlaws.”

Then he turned  
To Idwal, saying,—

“ Master of my soul !

The stranger craves to hear our minstrelsy.  
Wilt thou not prove to his astonished ears  
That fame for once has undertold the truth ?”

Without a word the aged bard outstretched  
His hand and took the harp. Blindly at first  
His trembling fingers groped among the strings  
And plucked in darkness music’s choicest flowers,  
Marring their tender bloom. But soon a flash  
Of inward fire enlightened all his soul ;  
And thus he sang, while the melodious strings  
Answered his touch. Or somewhat like to this.  
For though his lays lived in the Cymric tongue  
For twice six hundred years, they perished then.  
Perished for ever with the Cymric bards  
Whom the first Edward slew, and naught remains  
But a faint echo of his stirring songs.

“ Across the shining sea  
The dove-winged vapours flee  
As with the sunrise from the East we come.

In outline clear and high  
Against the sunny sky

Once more I see the cliffs that guard our home,  
The breastplate of the warrior-Queen  
Embossed with rocky points and laced with streamers  
green.

“ I see the inland hills  
Inveined with milky rills,  
Our captive Mother’s breasts of faithful love.  
Majestic, motionless,  
She lies in her distress,  
And marks the changeful clouds that sweep above.

They troop before her stedfast eyes  
That gazing upward fain would spell their mysteries.

“ Musing on all her wrongs  
Her gaze she still prolongs,  
Until the heavens grow pale with sympathy ;  
Then, as the clouds unroll  
A vast and various scroll  
Thick-writ with promises of vengeance nigh,  
Fresh vigour throbs in every vein,  
She sees the spoiler spoiled, she sees the slayer slain.

“ Though gashed with many a wound,  
With many a fetter bound,

Her royal limbs lie prone and helpless still ;  
 Yet sound and free and strong  
 Her inward forcees throng  
 Around the colours of unconquered Will.  
 With that victorious standard hers,  
 The freedom that she claims, a righteous Heaven  
 confers.

“ From many a mountain-cell,  
 From many a secret dell,  
 Borne in whose arms the prattling streamlets go,  
 From many a dim retreat  
 Untracked by alien feet  
 Her lurking warriors watch the careless foe,  
 Low-crouching for a space they stay,  
 Like the fierce wild-cat ere she bounds upon her prey.

“ Woe to the robber Rome !  
 I see the Cymri eome  
 Like a wild torrent down the mountain side.  
 I see the hateful race  
 Whelmed in a last disgrace,  
 Their dying shrieks re-echo far and wide.  
 Woe, woe to Rome ! on ruin’s verge  
 She lightly seeks a song, but finds her funeral dirge.”

Here, looking full upon the Maccabee,  
He ceased. His features, which the while he sung  
Quivered with passion, slowly re-assumed  
Their rigid aspect, as the outraged soul  
That lately at their loopholes threatened war  
Withdrew into its secret citadel.  
But scarcely had he ceased, when eagerly  
The Maccabee began to answer him.  
“ My fingers cannot rule the harp,” he cried,  
“ Nor have I skill to guide the stream of thought  
Through soft-opposing marginals of rhyme.  
Like your own mountain-streams, my untaught speech  
Chooses the nearest, though a rugged way.  
Listen, and pardon.

“ Sirs, be well assured,  
Although we voyage from the shores of Rome,  
We come not to your island of the West  
As Romans, flushed with pride of victory,  
To flout at your disasters, or to mock  
Misfortunes that but make you kin with us.  
Our country and our home, alas ! like yours,  
Are trampled down beneath the spoiler’s feet,  
Those iron feet that grind a shrinking world.  
Sirs, we are Jews ; and but as aliens dwelt

Within the walls of Rome. My comrade drew  
His earliest breath upon those sunrise shores  
Whence sailed your fathers. As for me, whose eyes  
First saw the light in Rome ; therefore, whose heart  
Perforce must love her even to the last,—  
As men will love their birthplace to the last,  
Though in a foreign land,—I too with him  
Am exiled from her gates for evermore.  
Enough of this. Let us forget awhile  
These petty strifes that vex the warring world,  
Forget the differences of race and name,  
Standing together 'neath this open sky  
That binds us in a common brotherhood  
To one great Father. Lo ! in these last days  
He speaks to us as never heretofore  
He spake unto our fathers. Not by mouth  
Of teacher or of prophet, but by One  
Born from His boundless essence, His express  
And perfect Image, Christ of Nazareth.  
Who, wrapped in robes of veiling manhood, moved  
Along the narrow track of this dim life  
And passed into the outer gloom beyond,  
Yielding His soul a faultless sacrifice  
For our misdoings, and returning thence

Enwreathed with victory. In His name we come  
To every varied clime afar and near :  
To ancient cities round the central sea,  
And hither to the margin of the world.  
And in His name we call the tribes of men  
To turn and leave their evil ways, and pass  
Through mystic waters to His conquering side ;  
To gather to His standard, lifted up  
Against the powers of darkness. Wherefore, sirs,  
Forsake the fruitless service of your shrines ;  
Forsake the false gods your frail hands have made ;  
Turn to the Great Almighty and Unseen,  
Who framed the worlds, and in our nostrils breathed  
His breath immortal. Lo ! beside His throne  
There stands the Crucified who lives again.  
He beckons you with hands that bled for you.  
His eyes are on you, eyes that once ran down  
With bitter tears for you. Hark ! hark ! He speaks ;  
The still, small voice is heard in every soul :—  
' Return, return, by Me the living Way  
Down-trodden in the depths of death for you.' "

Thus spoke the Maccabee. In eager haste  
He seized the theme. But soon the faltering tones,  
More solemn, more impassioned, showed a heart

Mastered thereby. And at the first, the bards  
Listened and gazed in blank astonishment  
At such untamed discourse, wide of all rules  
Of rhetoric or rhyme. But in a while  
Their keen discernments and their nice disdains  
Passed out of sight. The rugged speech had roused  
A silent war of thought in many a breast ;  
Yet with impassive looks they strove to hide  
The conflict from their fellows and themselves.  
And when his voice ceased somewhat suddenly,  
The well-instructed Llarian took the word,  
Speaking from high to low in calm disdain.

“ O stranger ! thou art wise to cast away  
The vain concerns of a noisy world.  
Life is a shallow show. God only lives.  
Into Whose essence we shall sink again,  
Subsiding silently in soundless depths,  
Unknowing and unknown. But for the rest :  
For these strange stories from the sunrise land,  
We hear them as we hear in after-times  
The wonder-tales that pleased our babyhood.”

And then he took the harp from Idwal’s hands  
And drew a dreamy prelude from the strings.  
Innumerable, soft, melodious sounds

Arose and fell along the yielding air  
Beneath his touch, as billows rise and fall  
When the wind plays upon the pliant sea.  
And through the listening circle round him ran  
Mute signs of admiration. Lifted brows  
Answered to silent lips that moving shaped  
Large words of praise. But when at length his voice  
Went sailing forth on those harmonious waves  
In stately utterance, each listener grew  
Forgetful of his fellow, and all grew  
Forgetful of the singer in the song.  
Rapt by the rare enchantment far above  
All thought of the enchanter's skill, their souls  
Floated afar on visionary wings,  
Until the world and all its pompous cares  
Dwindled to nothingness, its ages shrank  
Into a moment's compass. But, alas !  
Worn out tradition creeping slowly down  
The wasteful centuries, long since has lost  
The forceful thoughts and the melodious phrase  
That took his hearers captive at his will.

“ When the wild and stormy waves,  
The white horses of the sea,

Rise from out their briny caves,  
By the breath of heaven set free ;  
How they marshal their array  
For an onset through the bay !  
How their restless pawings scoop  
The sea-hollows ! till the troop  
Dashes up the trembling beach :  
Where an unseen line they reach  
O'er whose goal  
Not the proudest wave that ever  
Charged the shore in mad endeavour  
Dares to roll.

“ As the foremost's foamy hoof  
Touches that mysterious line,  
Starting back, he rears aloof  
Poised upon a balance fine  
For a moment :—then with roar  
Like the thunder, on the shore  
Plunging headlong, breaks and falls.  
From the cliff the echo calls ;  
While, far up the pebbly steeps,  
Wide the wat'ry ruin sweeps  
Ere it tires ;

And with hollow, rattling moans  
Shrinking back among the stones,  
Slow expires.

“ Yet the following wave as fast  
O'er the quivering relics flies ;  
Curled aloft in volume vast  
Tilts against the stormy skies.  
Now once more, that viewless hand  
Bids the daring water stand :  
Hurls it with resistless force  
On the shore, resounding hoarse.  
Yet still rolling loud and long  
On they come, a thousand strong,  
Scorning rest ;  
Till the slow-subsiding main  
Draws them softly once again  
To its breast.

“ So with man : by breath divine  
Lifted like a transient wave  
From life's sea : in line on line  
Rolled to break upon the grave.  
Races, empires, towering rise ;  
Each in turn collapsing dies :

Schools and systems proudly heave ;  
Soon like them no vestige leave :  
Far along the shore of Time  
Swell and sinks the sounding chime,  
Ceaseless, till  
Gathered back in calm repose  
To the depths from whence they rose,  
All are still.

“ When, like breakers on the shore,  
Dying sink the Cymric race :  
When our wars and songs are o'er  
And you pass into our place :  
Brief will then your glory be,  
Brief as our adversity. ”  
Merged in nations now unknown,  
Risen again to claim our own,  
We, as baffled Rome recoils  
On the splendour of her spoils,  
Conquering leap :  
Higher up the glittering strands,  
Farther round the golden sands  
We shall sweep.

“ Empty vaunt ! and idle fear !  
Soon the eternal calm shall come,  
When the kingdoms disappear  
And the shouting wars are dumb.  
Then like some forgotten dream  
All our puny strifes shall seem :  
Lulled within that ocean, where  
Comes nor triumph nor despair ;  
Far in whose unfathomed deep  
Alien races peaceful sleep  
Side by side.  
There, unquenched by storm or night,  
Evermore the sacred Light  
Rules the tide.”

4

Now might be seen that as this languid close  
Fainted away, a dull and dreamy look  
Was left behind on every listener’s face.  
Each felt a subtle network wound about  
His quick affections ; while some palsying power,  
That numbed the nerve of motive, crept along  
The muscles of the mind, and locked it up  
In chill indifference. Wherefore should we toil  
To find the truth of nature and of God ;

To right the wrong in self and in the world ;  
Why vex our souls with any careful aims ;  
If life be but a transient, barren show,  
A trivial ripple on a boundless sea,  
Soon smoothed for ever ?

Julius was the first  
To free his spirit from these cobweb-chains,  
And fling them to the winds. “ O sir,” he said,  
“ Thine is a noble song and nobly sung ;  
Alive with all the passion of the sea ;  
Melodious with its mournful cadences ;  
Yet with a calm heart like its central depths.  
And ever, as thy touch inspired the strings  
I seemed to hear ten thousand thousand waves  
Dissolve in music on a distant shore.

“ But yet methinks if all men steeped their souls  
In these delicious languors ; which beat down  
The strongest wing of hope, nay destroy hope,  
Or level its high meaning with despair ;  
Which puff the hollow heart and empty mind  
With dull resistance, till they simulate  
The force and fervour of a living soul ;  
Which make good evil, making evil good,  
And both a transient and unmeaning form ;

Methinks if this dead-calm philosophy  
Became the common faith of all mankind,  
Soon none were left to hold it. Since, deprived  
Of that main stimulus and spur of life  
Which points to endless conquests and increase,  
Life upon life remodelled,—sire and son  
Linked in unbroken chain,—a noble race  
Where he that wisely wins bequeaths his strength  
To him that follows in the vast career ;  
Deprived of this, the gross material frame  
Might still increase and multiply, to fill  
A sordid world with counterfeits of man ;  
But the true man, God's viceroy in the earth,  
Formed in His image, formed to conquer self,  
To ravel out His secret ways in time  
And win the better life that lies beyond,  
Would wither in a lonely barrenness.

“ Pardon, O bards, the freedom of my words ;  
And let me crave of you indulgent ears,  
While with ungarnished speech I utter forth  
The burden of the message in my soul,  
Touching the godlike destiny of man.

“ Not as the waves arise upon the sea  
Does man arise out of the depths of God.

But as the vapours which the sea exhales  
That parting float along the yielding air ;  
Now piled aloft in creamy battlements,  
Now molten in a mass of threatening steel,  
Now spread in snowy network on the blue,  
Now lying scattered far in fleecy flocks,  
Range beyond range, that narrow to the west  
And bask in dying splendours of the sun.

Then, as the long processions of the clouds  
Advance to bless the thirsty solitudes ;  
To feed the vital juices of the soil  
And live in all the myriad forms of life ;—  
To trickle from the secret mountain-springs,  
To blend in rills and gather into streams,  
Until the vast collective rivers roll  
Their wealth and beauty through the peopled plains ;—  
So passes on the immortal breath of God  
Outbreathed in the immortal soul of man.

What though the rivers run into the sea ?  
The flowers remain ; the flocks have quenched their  
thirst,  
What though this transient life return to God ?  
The separate essence of the soul He made,  
Still unabsorbed, remains to praise Him still.

We are the offspring of His life and love,  
Destined to people out that life and love  
Through yet untrodden wilds of space and time.  
Such was His charge to man, His delegate  
Throned in the centre of a docile world.

“ Alas ! dethroned as soon as throned, he fell,  
Reaching too high ; and life’s unsullied stream  
Was poisoned by one subtle drop of sin  
In its first springing forth. Alas ! alas !  
Let all the morning stars that shouted once  
For joy, for ever weep their dewy tears.

“ Yet how could finite spirits choose the right  
Save through the tyrant discipline of wrong ?  
And how could frailty learn that it was frail  
Save by severe experience ? Therefore God  
In foresight calm withheld His awful arm.  
And now His image in the darkened soul  
Grew dim and far, and in its stead arose  
Base idols all distorted and defaced  
By attributes of evil manifold  
Reflected from an evil consciousness.  
Then, worshipping these attributes, the soul  
Grew baser yet, defiling and defiled,  
For ever sinking deeper in the mire

Of yet more vile idolatry. At length  
God from the thickest darkness stretched an arm  
And summoned one from out the tribes of men,  
And faithful Abram drawing near obeyed.  
Abram the father of a chosen race  
Stubborn and dull of heart yet fearing God.  
But all the world besides rolled round in sin ;  
For though He spake to these in sun and moon  
And all the punctual bounties of the year,  
They would not heed. Wherefore He gave them up  
To foul disgrace, blackening and deepening still.

“ But yet once more from dazzling depths which seem  
To us but darkness, comes that beckoning Hand.  
Not now to one, but all : not now to found  
A sacred nation but to save a world,  
Roman and Briton, Greek and Jew.

“ O sirs !

Did I not speak of rivers, flowers, and flocks ?  
Begone, begone, with tame comparisons.  
The free soul mocks the grasp of simile  
And bursts away to stand apart, alone,  
More inaccessible than any star.  
But bid her now to question of herself  
And she will answer boldly—yea—I am,

And *shall be* through the widening worlds beyond ;  
And in the buried seed of this small life  
My boundless future lies, a pliant germ.

“ Therefore awake ! arise ! shake off your dreams,  
Stand before God and hear Him when He speaks  
By us His servants and His witnesses.  
Lo ! life and immortality are brought  
To light at length by Christ the risen One.  
The morn your ancient seers and bards desired,  
But died or ere they saw, has dawned on you.  
O ! rise and follow to the perfect day.  
Advance as men whom a great captain leads  
To glittering heights of conquest. Then at last  
When the loud shout of triumph rings afar  
Through echoing worlds, when the great fight is fought,  
The warrior rests upon his well-tried arms.  
Not sinking in the depths of Deity  
Unknowing and unknown, absorbed, diffused ;—  
But all compact in full identity,  
And welcomed to his spirit’s father-land,  
He dwells at peace, he knows as he is known.  
There, in that genial clime, the royal flower  
Of manhood shall unfold from age to age  
Nobler and nobler yet for evermore.”

Here Julius ceased. His animated hand  
Sank by his side. And on his countenance  
O'er which so many lights and shades of thought  
Had flitted while he spoke, there fell again  
Its wonted radiant calm, full of the Heaven  
His latest words portrayed.

But now the time  
For song and for discourse was past. The ship  
Neared the low beach, alive with villagers ;  
Whose voices, mingled in a busy hum,  
Swelled on the air as shoreward plunged the keel.  
The fishermen, in eager haste to share  
In her unlading, shouting drew their fleet  
Of slight canoes and buoyant coracles  
Down to the oozy verge, deeming the tide  
Too low to lift her to the pier. Behind,  
The ready-worded mothers and shy maids  
Stood on the higher ridges of the beach.  
These with round arms shading their curious eyes  
Gazed at the vessel and the crowded pier.  
While those would ever and anon break off  
Their eager speech to glance along the shore  
And shrill a warning to some heedless child  
Straying too far upon the treacherous sand,

That rose in spongy circlets round about  
The little footprints. High upon the left  
A guard of Roman legionaries stood,  
Their bright arms flashing in the morning sun,  
To question of the names and the intents  
Of such as landed; while with humorous taunts  
That showed small reverence for the conquering race  
The Cymric crowd looked on.

And now full soon,  
While yet the tide was deep about the pier,  
The vessel neared it, and the sailors flung  
The chains ashore, and laid a rugged bridge  
Of planks between. Then first the train of bards  
Attended by a pompous retinue  
That bore the harps, the wands, the sacred sprigs  
Wreathed in dark symbols; and were bent beneath  
Changes of raiment and the thousand things  
Which meet, or fail to meet, the thousand needs  
Of those whom fortune favours, swept on shore.  
While lost within the shadow of their state  
The pilgrims stepped behind them, bearing each  
A staff and scrip, no more: saving in truth  
His favour in Whose favour there is life  
And more than wealth or fame. And hidden thus

They might have passed unnoticed by the guard,  
But that they honoured law even in the hands  
Of lawless usurpation and drew near.  
And as it chanced, the captain, sorely chafed  
By all the tangled business of the bards,  
Worse tangled by the comments of the crowd,  
Turned the side-gleane of a distracted eye  
To where the pilgrims stood, and glad to seize  
A moment's respite, reached a hasty hand  
To take their rolls of licence, set his seal,  
And bade the soldiers let them pass in peace.

Now as they went in silence up the beach  
They heard a step that followed hastily,  
And turning, Llarian faced them.

“Sirs”—he said,

“Forgive me for this forced companionship,  
And bear with me a moment. For I see  
That spite of all your marvels and wild tales,  
And spite of all our symbols, with the which  
We give a solid form to certain truths  
Too subtle for the vulgar mind to seize,  
We yet are brothers in the inner faith.  
For you err widely when you call on us  
To leave the false gods our frail hands have made.

You take the sign for what it signifies,  
The portrait for the person ;—even as if  
You saw a lover kiss the written name  
Of her he loves, and straightway counted him  
A fool to pour the passion of his soul  
Upon the senseless tracings of a reed.

“ But while I speak, my own reproving words  
Fly back against me ; ”—here he fixed his eye  
Upon the Maccabee.—“ Perchance the tale  
The which thou toldest and I counted vain :—  
Of one who was the offspring of a God,  
And yet a mortal man ; yet after death  
Within the self-same body lived again ;—  
Is but the outward allegoric form  
In which you fashion to the common gaze  
Some lofty, incommunicable truth.  
(Nay, let me speak a moment more), if so,  
Thy gracious pardon ; but thy look and voice  
Seemed so alive with living certainties,  
They drew me from the proper scent of thought.  
But now that we have left the crowd behind,  
And no gross, undiscerning ears can hear,  
Let us fling off reserve ; for we are one :  
Bard, teacher, priest or Druid,—all are one.”

“ Nay,” said the Maccabee, in outraged tones,  
“ We worship one Jehovah, the true God,  
And strive to bring the nations to His feet :  
You serve you know not what ; and what you know  
You muse up in mystery, and thence draw  
Your own advantage.”

“ It were truer far,”  
Answered the well-bred Llarian, “ and more kind,  
To say we serve *you* know not what ; for *we*  
Know well the God we serve : a God unseen  
From Whom the streaming currents of the seen  
Flow outwards, and to Whom they turn again :  
The God Who in the infant days of time  
Was worshipped in the groves and on the hills  
Of Defrobani, whence our fathers came.  
Here in the sacred islands of the West  
His worship lingers, and His priests are we.  
As to our own advantage, I perceive  
That thou art shamed to own the graceless word,  
Therefore I will but say, Alas ! 'tis true  
That everywhere and always may be found  
The evil-minded man ; and such a man,  
If trusted with the sacred offices,  
Grows yet more evil ; as a lifeless thing

Corrupts the sooner in the sun's pure beams.  
But lo ! "—he turned to Julius,—“ on thy lips  
Some utterance hovers ; and thy silver hairs  
Give hope of wisdom. Thy discourse was wise.  
Speak then and I will listen heedfully.”

Then Julius, thus besought, said with a smile,  
“ I am not over-careful, courteous youth,  
To claim thy meed of wisdom ; lest perchance,  
When thou hast heard me further, thou reclaim  
The rash preferment. That most precious pearl  
Of wisdom, for the which I, having found,  
Have bartered all I ever counted wise  
Before I found it, might but seem to thee  
A worthless bauble ; since the spirit's eye  
Sees only what the pictured type within  
Prepares her to perceive. So that none know  
This heavenly wisdom as the wisest thing,  
But those in whom a sacred craving forms  
The mould that fits her. Therefore, O my son,  
Pray for this boon : without it, though I speak  
As with an angel's tongue, I speak in vain.

“ Now therefore be it known to thee, the tale  
Which thou hast counted vain, must still be vain,  
If that the sober truth be vanity.

For He of Whom my comrade spoke, in Whom  
The invisible glories of the God of gods  
Dwelt visibly, Whose mortal body died  
Even as we die, but rose as we shall rise  
When the great gates of Hades roll away ;  
He is no fable-fabric, shaped at will  
To house a truth too delicate to bear  
The common contact of the crowd ; far less  
Is He a dazzling marvel, forged to chain  
Their credulous obedience. But He lived,  
Nor long ago, upon this common earth.

'Tis in the memory of living men  
How amidst signs and wonders He was born  
Of a pure Jewish maiden, in the land  
Given to our fathers in the olden time.  
In Him, a man among the sons of men,  
The Godhead walked on earth, poor and despised,  
Reversing all the maxims of the age.  
His words of godlike power, if writ at full,  
Would cumber up the world ; His deeds of love,  
If told at large, would overlast the night  
And lengthen out beyond the following days,  
And still the half would linger on untold,  
Yet none the less, nay far the more, for all

This ample raying forth of love and pow'r,—  
The bitterness of envy followed Him,  
The hatred of the darkness thrust Him forth,  
Into the cruel hands of lawless law ;  
So that His mortal manhood died forlorn.  
That thus it should be, seers had long foretold ;  
And thus it came to pass ; and all I tell  
Took solid shape within this outer life.  
And be thou sure of this ; no fables, spun  
By condescending brains for simple ears,  
Can body forth with such vitality  
The nature of the great Unsearchable,  
As did the life He lived, the death He died."

" These are strange things," said Llarian, " which  
you bring  
To our astonished ears :" and as he spoke,  
The war of light and darkness in his soul  
Sent up its solemn gleams and awful glooms  
To flash and darken o'er his troubled brow :  
" Or, if they be not as you think, at least  
They show strange cravings in the human hearts  
That conjured up this tale to quiet them :—  
Yet not so strange ; for I myself have heard  
From out a hollow chamber of my heart

A sad voice issue ; as of one that pined  
In bitter solitude ; deep, deep within ;  
Too deep for utterance in articulate words,  
But with a melancholy sound that said,  
Oh, I am weary, weary to the death  
Of all this vast, inhuman, Infinite,  
Which men call God ; which never drops adown  
One tear of pity ; never sheds below  
One look of love ; and never reaches forth  
A hand of help :—But when I heard this voice  
I choked it down with wise remonstrances,  
Nor dreamed till now it spoke the truth.”

He ceased.

And on the sunny shore they sat them down,  
And Julius spake again ; and Llarian  
Answered again ; yea many times again  
Each spoke and answered ; till the shaft of truth  
Pierced deep within the heart of Llarian,  
Healing the wound it made. An hour went by  
Before he marked how far the ebbing tide  
Had shrunk to seaward. Then he sprang to his feet,  
Saying in softened and regretful tones,  
“ But we must part ; for see where Idwal stands  
Upon the western cliff and beckons me.

I scarcee would grieve that master of my soul  
For all the light to which his eyes are blind.  
And yet I would ; for he has bid me seek  
Truth before all ; and in the after-world  
Idwal himself will more than pardon me.  
But now farewell ; perchance our threads of life  
May cross again and weave a firmer bond."

Thus Llarian parted ; and the other twain  
Followed his lessening shape along the sands  
With eyes of silent blessing ; while their souls  
Burned in an unseen sacrifice of prayer.  
And when his many-coloured robe grew dim  
Within the dusky distance, and his form  
Had dwindled slowly to a gliding speck,  
And they had turned them to their course again,  
That unseen sacrifice was fragrant still  
Upon God's altar.

Now it came to pass,  
While yet the brief autumnal day shone warm,  
They left the level shore for a rough track,  
By which in weary plight they fared along  
A marshy vale ; while faint and fainter grew  
The sound of the deep breathing of the sea,  
That panted far behind them on the sands.

And when the sun sloped to the west, and all  
The reedy pools on either side were red  
With slant reflections from the flaming sky,  
Their weary feet still traced a winding course  
Along low hillocks plumed with faded grass,  
On which their waving shadows rose and fell.

The misty breath of Autumn settled chill  
Upon the plain, and not a sound was heard.  
Save when a moor-hen, startled from her nest,  
Fled through the rustling sedges ; or anon,  
A nimble-witted water-rat discerned  
The echo of their feet above his home,  
And dropping in the pool with a soft splash  
Ferried across to the opposing shore,  
Clasped in the gleaming ripple that he made.  
North-west they toiled along, intent to gain  
A tufted mount that stood advanced before  
The inland hills, and jutted on the plain.  
They walked in silence ; for the bare, wild scene  
Looked doubly wild and bare to alien eyes,  
Used to the glowing beauty of the South.  
Even the farewell glances of the sun,  
That filled the sober aspect of the clouds  
With lively red, seemed cold and watery

To Julius : to whose thoughts the dappled sky  
Showed like the tear-stained face of one who parts  
In sorrow and mistrust ; unlike the look  
Of happy skies in Lydia. Often there,  
Standing at evening on the fading shore,  
His lengthening shadow sloping up the beach,  
Had he beheld a path of glory span  
The blue Egæan ; from the moistened sand  
Beneath his feet, on to the utmost verge ;  
And in that path ten thousand thousand waves  
That like a crowd of silken courtiers  
Came thronging smoothly from the open gates  
Of the air-palace ; whose foundations shone  
With all the precious, many-tinted stones  
That garnish forth the heavenly city's walls.  
There, gazing far through airy colonnades  
That lengthened still as still the turning earth  
Rolled eastward darkly, he had seen within  
The splendid presence of the setting sun,  
Throned like a king, whose favourable smiles  
Enrich his parting vassals to the last.

And then a contrast keener far than this  
Or any other in the outer world,  
Pressed on the Maccabee and silenced him.

How dainty-splendid looked their enterprise,  
Seen from afar ! how rudely squalid now !  
Then in heroic unity it rose  
And seemed to float mid-heaven, from crown to base  
Clothed with immortal bloom, and delicate  
By airy veils of distance drawn between.  
Now, broken into trivial points, it stood  
Based on low dust, the rosy tints were gone,  
And the coarse grain of circumstantial life  
Thrust itself all unflattered into view.



## P A R T   I I I.

As thus the pilgrims mused, upon their left  
A figure seemed to start as from the ground,  
And Cynfrân strode towards them. His curled locks,  
Black as the seaweed left by stormy tides  
High on bleached ridges of the summer shore,  
Were all aflame against the crimson sky  
That burned behind him, and made yet more pale  
The white wrath of his face ; while in his eyes  
Flashed hate unquenchable : in his right hand  
The ashen spear was poised, ready to fly.

At this strange sight the pilgrims held their breath:  
They lacked not courage ; yet their manly hearts

Blenched for a moment, and each strove in vain  
To thrust his fellow to the safer place,  
Awaiting the assault.

But Cynfrân checked  
His fierce career, seeing them all unarmed,  
And lowered the threatful spear and called to them  
In deepest gutturals of the Cymric tongue,—  
“ Draw forth your weapons, for I scorn to take  
Advantage of surprisal.”

“ Nay, good friend,  
We bear no weapons, save a kindly will  
To thee and all mankind,” said Julius then,  
Advancing towards him with a gracious mien.

But Cynfrân answered sternly,—“ Stand aloof,  
Or else my spear shall pin thee to the ground.  
Say, what has brought you hither? Are ye not  
Of that vile race that wrongs us, that has snared  
Our Caradoc by treacherous woman-hands,  
And bound him to your general’s chariot-wheels,  
And given him as a show to gaping Rome?  
Yea, and his sire besides, the generous Brân,  
Thralling the prisoner and the hostage too?”

“ Enough,” said Julius, “ thou hast widely erred;  
My comrade is a Roman, but he owes

No boon but exile to the Roman power.  
For me : I first drew breath upon the shore  
Whence sailed your fathers. For the rest : know  
this,—

Although a shameful treachery has given  
Your noble Caradoc to Cæsar's hands,  
Though a more shameful treachery still holds  
The hostage and the prisoner both in Rome,  
Yet sire and son are treated royally,  
And lodged and served right nobly, as becomes  
Such noble captives. If in happier times  
Thou hast fought in the king's forces, or hast served  
In the king's council, thou wilt know this ring,  
Which proves us trusty friends of Caradoc."

And while he spoke he lifted his right hand,  
And straight the sunset flashed upon a gem,  
Turned to the palm, clasped by a serpent wrought  
In finest gold. Then Cynfran at the sight  
Had almost fallen before them ; for how oft  
That gem had flashed upon the royal hand  
That cheered the Cymric forces to the charge.  
" Pardon me, sirs," he faltered forth at length,  
" I thought as much to see the sky descend,  
The sea hang in its place above our heads,

As to find friends of Caradoc in you.  
Lo ! I am yours : command me : I am nerved  
By memories of inexpiable wrongs  
To do more cruel and more desperate deeds  
Upon the alien race than ever yet  
Curdled your blood to hear of or to dream.  
You come to stir the smouldering fire of the land ?  
To gather up the scattered Cymric strength  
And hurl the invaders headlong ? I am yours,  
Yours to the death."

" Nay," Julius sternly said,  
" Our errand is as far from thy wild thoughts  
As heaven is far above the howling storm.  
This royal signet-ring was merely given  
That the king's friends may trust us. Rave not thus  
Of memories of inexpiable wrong :  
The most inexpiable and most cruel wrong  
That ever yet was done by man to man,  
Shrinks into nothing by the monstrous growth  
Of that vast wrong he heaps upon himself,  
Who, wrenching off his soul from God and good,  
Sells her pure beauty to the vilest ends ;  
Whether revenge or some yet viler end,  
If there be viler. Go and muse on this :

Vengeance belongs to God; and His revenge  
Is love and mercy."

So they turned and went :  
While dumb with manifold surprise, and pierced  
To the soul's quick, Cynfrân stood motionless,  
All darkly drawn against the western sky,  
Till they had passed the levels of the marsh.  
But as they went upon their way, the heart  
Of Julius smote him. For he thought :—‘ Perchance  
This soul is sorely wounded, and its cry  
That fell with such discordance on my ear  
Was harsh through grievous anguish. Yea, he spoke  
Of memories of inexpiable wrongs ;  
And through his wildly melancholy eyes  
Looked forth a miserable life. Alas !  
How have I failed to follow in Thy track,  
Most pitiful Jesus ! who wouldest never break  
The bruiséd reed, but bind it up with love.’  
And then once more and for the thousandth time  
He thought of Claudia. Of the gentle grace,  
The meek, unconscious wisdom of her ways ;  
Of that clear eye of a most single aim  
Which filled the body of her life with light.  
So shamed his heart with stern comparisons,

Laid all his spirit open to the light,  
Abased himself and won the power to rise.

Now as they left the fourth long league behind  
They neared the tufted knoll, and found it stood  
Amidst a steep and stony watercourse,  
Down which the streamlet ran which fed the marsh.  
It was an islet fenced about with trees,  
And piled by Druids of forgotten days  
About an oak of double sacredness.  
Seeing that round its solitary roots  
The homage of the parted stream was poured,  
And that the healing plant had grown thereon.  
Below the mount the waters met again  
With gurgling wecomes, and the happy stream  
Quickened its pace and hastened blithely on ;  
Unguessing how the melancholy marsh  
Would spread a net to catch her silver feet,  
And choke her tuneful voice, and hold her fast  
Like a poor fly within the spider's web,  
From the great mother-sea, that heaved afar  
Her gleaming breast along the low-ridged shore,  
Chiding and calling to her lingering child.  
Crossing the brook, they set themselves to climb,  
The turfy slope ; when suddenly there broke

Upon their startled ears a mournful voice  
That with wild guttural plainings filled the air :  
And when he heard it, Julius paused amazed,  
And with his right hand timorously checked  
His fellow by the robe ; while with the left  
Curved round his ear, he strove to catch the sounds  
That wandered to and fro among the trees.  
Again that piercing, melancholy ery !  
At which the Maccabee released his robe  
From Julius' grasp, and springing up the knoll  
He disappeared, while Julius' slower steps  
Toiled up behind : but e'er he reached midway,  
The younger rose upon the ridge again,  
A hushing finger signing on his lips,  
The bright defiance wholly melted out  
From all his altered face, which wore instead  
The pained and tender look of one who sees  
A sorrow with an unknown history.

Soon side by side they stood, and looking down  
Saw in the centre a huge oak that reared  
A gnarled and knotted trunk, which held aloft  
A roof of ponderous foliage. Tier on tier,  
The twisted bough and branch and angular twig  
Carried through great to small, through small to less,

The image of a rugged earnest strength.  
While like a man bent on a noble aim,  
Who clothes himself with beauty unawares,  
Each sinewy limb was wreathed with carven leaves  
In graceful groups, that joined themselves again  
In larger masses rich with gold and green  
And leafy hollows filled with violet shade.  
But Julius and his fellow only marked  
A lonely woman sitting still as death  
Among the bare roots of that ancient tree,  
Beside a hoary sacrificial stone.  
Her face was on her knees, around her knees  
The clasp of ivory arms, and down her neck  
A rippled fleece of dusky tresses hung  
Over the ruined richness of a robe  
That told of happier times. Above her head  
The squirrel plucked the acorn, at her feet  
The robin hopped and flitted unabashed.  
But as the pilgrims questioned under breath,  
"Does she still live?" "Was not that cry her last?"  
"Nay, see the vital tension of her hands:—"—  
As thus they whispered, suddenly she sprang  
With a wild gesture to her feet, and waved  
Her outspread arms on the regardless air.

The well-accustomed creatures of the wood  
Marked her no more than if a harmless sheep  
Had risen up from depths of dewy grass  
Uttering her plaintive call for a strayed lamb ;  
While in the Cymrie tongue she cried aloud,  
Awaking all the echoes with her song :—

“ O Gladys ! Gladys ! Gladys ! come to me !

My soul cries after thee.

As from the crag the wailing eagle cries  
After her eaglet, when the swift mist flies  
Thick sweeping o'er Eriri, and her eyes  
Have lost all ken of the weak, fluttering thing  
Whose untried wing  
Never again may come  
To nestle underneath her breast at home.

“ O Gladys ! Gladys ! Gladys ! come to me !

My soul cries after thee.

It cannot be that thou hast slipped aside  
Into the life unseen, whose waters wide  
Sweep round the life we see ; for had'st thou died  
Thy spirit in its parting agony  
Had turned to me :  
But not a sound or vision  
Has warned my watching soul of thy transition.

“ O Gladys ! Gladys ! Gladys ! come to me !

My soul cries after thee.

Hear me ! Thou great, unutterable One,

To none save the white-bearded Druids known.

To whom along this sacrificial stone

Full many a victim's flowing blood has passed.

Hear me at last !

O ! end this weary pain,

Give back my nursling to my arms again.

“ Alas ! no more a nursling ! twelve sad years

Washed by my stormy tears,

One after one have lost their bloom and died,

Since Gladys, my heart's darling, as blue-eyed

As speedwells are, was parted from my side ;

And as a stranger would she greet me now.

Yet where art thou ?

My soul cries after thee.

O Gladys ! Gladys ! Gladys ! come to me.”

At this refrain she paused, and swept the sky

And all the grove and all the land about

With wild despairing eyes ; then sank again

On the cold ground among the wrinkled roots.

Now Julius bade his comrade by a sign

Remain aloof ; and with his eyes tear-dimmed  
Went forward in compassionate courtesy  
To warn the mourner of their presence near.  
His footsteps rustling in the withered leaves  
Plucked back her senses, self-withdrawn and drowned  
Within the still depths of an absent mind.  
A gleam of hope sparkled within her eyes ;  
And rising calmly, her dilated form  
Stood solemnly expectant ; but alas !  
When she saw nothing but a way-worn man  
Advancing towards her, all her features fell,  
Displeasure darkened in her gloomy looks,  
And pride and sternness stiffened every limb.

“ Sad mother,” said he gently, “ pardon us ;  
In no officious freedom do we break  
Upon thy sacred sorrow. Strangers here,  
Seeking a pathway to the inland hills,  
We chanced upon this mount ; and could not fail  
To hear thee mourning for a long-lost child.  
The words thou uttered’st touched a secret spring  
Of grief in my own breast, and made it flow ;  
For I too mourn a dear and long-lost child  
Held captive by the snares of wicked men.”

At this her proud eyes shot a spark of scorn,

And thus she answered—" If thy love were such,  
So cold, so careless, as to leave thy child  
Captive amid the snares of wicked men,  
It is not worthy to sit down and mourn  
Here in the dust by mine." But Julius met  
Her scorn with meekness, saying, " Let it be ;  
We will not vex the soreness of our hearts  
By any rash reproaches ; nor expand  
Our tearful woes into a cloud of words  
In bitter rivalry. Thy cup of grief,  
Lady, I see, is full to overflow ;  
And mine, God knows, has scanty room to spare.  
Yet must I own, my loss has not that edge  
Which wounds the instinct of the quivering flesh.  
The life which throbs in my child's outward frame  
Called me not father ; but her soul's dear life  
Was fed through mine from the eternal source.  
And could I know that still that life is hers,  
Our mournful parting I could almost hail  
As a delightful meeting. Oftentimes  
In silent messages at dead of night  
Her spirit to my spirit witnesses  
That so it is. Then trembling with the joy  
I waken, and give thanks that my lost lamb

Is safe within the Heavenly Shepherd's fold."

These healing thoughts that touched with tender hand

Her inward hurts, so fretted heretofore  
With cruel fears and fancies of the brain,  
Softened her heart at first : so that she stood  
With lips half opened and with moistened eyes,  
Hanging upon his words ; but when he ceased  
Her brow regathered all its ominous shade,  
And thus she answered him—

“ Stranger, thou speak'st

Fantastic riddles to a broken heart :  
I only know that I have lost my child.  
Not mine by any fanciful conceit,  
But by the close, quick tie of motherhood.  
Mine,—for she drew her essence from my heart ;  
Mine,—by an anguish, by a rapture too,  
Endured, enjoyed, by me and me alone ;  
Mine,—by the helpless, formless infancy  
That lay unconscious in my arms and thrilled  
Their veins with new, unutterable life ;  
While in each finger that so gently pressed  
Her fragile limbs, lay hid a giant's strength  
To shield them from the faintest touch of harm.”

Before the sacred passion of her grief  
Julius a moment pased: then with few words  
Emphatic, and a countenance that showed  
Through its transparent veil the light within,  
He strove to kindle a like cheering flame  
Within the gloomy chamber of her heart.  
“ O lady, rest assured, the All-seeing One,  
On whom but even now thy spirit called,—  
Who gave the child and gave the love she found,—  
Still has her in His ken, though far from thine.  
Yet tell me, was thy child stolen from thy side ?  
Our business takes us far and wide, throughout  
The Cymric lands, and we may chance to light  
Upon some hints or traces of the maid.”

At this a faint light struggled through the gloom  
That shadowed all her face; and with a voice  
Changed as the worn-out wind changes its voice  
When maddening storms abate, she answered him.—  
“ Like a sick sheep, whom all the butting flocks  
Chase from the fold, have I, alas ! been long;  
My kindred would not bear with my complaints,  
And drove me from their homesteads and their paths,  
And for the rest I scorned their proffered aid.  
Thus dwelling outcast in the eaves and woods,—

Conversing only with the reckless winds  
And tumbling torrents,—their monotonous sounds  
Have sunk into my brain : till all I feel ;  
All I remember ; all that once I was ;  
And all the horror of the thing I am ;—  
Has grown an inarticulate misery.

“ Yet still it might be uttered, were this all,  
Were I alone ;—but,—let me whisper it,—  
A hateful thing is with me in the woods.  
It glares upon me from the noonday sky ;  
It mocks me from behind the forest-trees ;  
And when I stoop to drink at any brook,  
Features more vile than any words can show,  
Yet with a shocking likeness to the face  
Worth more than all the world beside to me,  
Are pictured in it close beside my own  
And ripple in and out and mix with them.”

Here Julius snapped the dark thread of her  
thoughts :—

“ O lady, I beseech thee, do not give  
The Evil one this mastery over thee,  
To speak as if his paltry trickery  
Were truth and substance. Rather cast thyself  
Into the strong arms of the God of gods ;

Gird up thy soul, and boldly trample out  
This spark of hell. And truly when we heard  
Thy sorrowing voice among these silent trees  
Thy words bespeak a mind that knew itself."

"Yea ! yea !" she cried, " but hear me, or my  
heart

Bursts with its ghastly secret. Then at times,  
When I have missed the horror for a while  
And my crushed soul begins to breathe once more,  
And,—like a hunted creature when the hunt  
Has swept its cruel pageant out of sight,  
Peers timidly from covert and begins  
To venture forth into the light again,—  
Just as calm thoughts, like clear, delicious springs,  
Spread out their coolness through my burning brain,  
Then from the very heart of that reprieve  
Breaks forth the blackness of a deeper doom ;  
A voice not mine rings from my loathing lips  
In cruel mockery ; by the which I know  
That through some unwatched door the enemy  
Has stolen into my citadel of life  
And has me in its wicked will ;—"

"Nay, nay,"

Said Julius, "none was ever yet, thank God,

In any wicked will save but his own.  
Though like a cruel beast the Evil one  
Roams for his prey, a greater far than he  
Is still at hand to pluck the trembling soul  
Out of his deathful jaws. Cry out to Him,—  
To the great Father of the spirits of men,—  
And He will hear and rescue.”

“ It may be : ”—

She answered,—“ for this quietness I feel,  
By which I hear the tumult that is past,  
And solve it into words, as I have done ;  
This quiet fell upon me when I came  
By chance on yonder crômlech ; which drew out  
My longing soul in cryings to the God  
Who lives unseen beneath the shows of things ;  
And Who, perchance, would succour me and give  
My lost one to my longing arms again,  
If but I brought an offering in my hand.  
But all my wealth is seized by grasping men,  
My treacherous kindred, who enrich themselves,  
Saying that I am mad. There is not left  
A single lamb of all my fruitful flocks  
To bleed and burn upon the altar now,  
In this my utmost need. But as I said,

This quiet fell upon me when my soul  
Had cried to the Unseen ; and it may be  
That He would save me from the hateful thing  
If but I brought an offering in my hand."

" Ah, Lady," answered Julius, " He is not  
A man, to do a favour for a gift.

Lo ! all the creatures of the wilderness,  
And all the cattle on a thousand hills,  
And all the fulness of the world, are His.  
As well to take a single grain of sand  
From all the myriads on the ample shore,  
And with great pomp of servile sacrifice  
Present it to the immeasurable sea.

The gift He asks for is a thankful heart  
That owns His love in all things, and in days  
Of trouble calls on Him, as calls a child,  
With no misgiving, on its father's name.

And as for our transgressions of the law  
Writ by His finger in the inward parts,  
He wraps His love, like a vast mantle, round  
Our naked souls and covers all our sin.

Yea, One that was to Him as much more dear  
Than any son to any father's heart,  
As God is more than man,—His only One,—

Who was before the eldest worlds were framed,  
And was the Word by which He framed the worlds,  
He did not spare in this our utmost need."

"Your words are strange," she answered ; " and  
anon

I would hear more ; but now that I am free  
From that vile presence, let me tell my tale."  
Then with authoritative looks that spoke  
Of times when many served her signing hand,  
She beckoned down the younger from the ridge  
And looked beyond them both and spake and said,—

"I was the bride of Owain, valiant Owain,  
Golden-haired Owain, heir of all our tribe,  
Grandson of Llyr, the ever-gracious king.  
Dark as the dusky evening were my looks,  
Fair as the morning his : and as the day,  
The ruddy, lively, and lighthearted day,  
Smit with his contrast in the gloomy night  
Follows for ever on her silent steps,  
So Owain, sunny-hearted, yellow-haired,  
Pursued me, dark and moody Gwendolen.  
And not more closely in the tender dawn  
Are these two wedded than our hearts were wed.  
Within that tender dawn a star arose :

Gladys our morning star. Those three brief years  
Seem like a lifetime ! thronged with pleasant cares  
And careful pleasures. Every golden day  
Held in its narrow bounds a whole July  
Of warmth and sunshine, as I watched my child.  
Fast, fast, in strength and loveliness she grew  
Within my cradling arms ; until at length,  
With something of a half regretful joy,  
I felt her little hand escape from mine,  
And saw her totter off across the grass,  
Lured by some sunlit flower."

Here, memory-snared,  
The mournful speaker dropped her dreamy eyes  
To where beneath the sapling oaks streamed in  
A ray of sunset light, and overflowed  
The turf with liquid gold.

" Yes, even now  
In my cold misery, I could almost smile,  
When I remember how the slender stalk  
Withstood her soft grasp at the first ; and then,  
Yielding and suddenly snapping in her hand,  
Disturbed the poise of her unpractised limbs,  
So that she sank down in a rosy heap.  
And how at that a filmy cloud of fear

Bedimmed her innocent brow ; yet scarcely seen  
Before it vanished in more radiant smiles.  
While her soft shout of babbling laughter hailed  
The dear-bought trophy.

“ But my thoughts have strayed :—  
Thus busied with my homeborn happiness  
I turned a deaf ear to the moaning griefs  
That filled the hapless land. The dissonant clash  
Of battle all about, the muttering roll  
Of other wars to come, were naught to me.  
When Owain spoke in passionate bitterness  
Of the great strifes and treacheries of the times,  
My lips alone replied, with eager words  
Covering my absent thoughts, that still caressed  
The child and father. But alas ! the while,  
And none the less because I would not see,  
There creeping came behind, near and more near,  
The cruel hour that snatched them from my arms.  
Silent, unf feared, it came ; like a fell beast  
That glides on velvet paws from out a wood,  
To where upon the sunny skirting bank  
The kids sport merrily.

“ For now once more  
As the white torrents hurry with fierce leaps

Adown Eriri's grey, precipitous side,  
To muster in the depths of Gwynant Vale  
And in the rolling Glaslyn issue forth,  
The Cymri gathered up their scattered strength,  
And pouring from their mountain fastnesses,  
Swept down upon the foe.

“ Among the rest

Owain arose, the heir of all his tribe,  
To lead them to the field. Proudly I wreathed  
The golden chaplet round the noble head  
That almost quenched it with its yellow curls ;  
Proudly I bound the shield upon his arm  
And gave the long lance to his nervous hand,  
While he stood silent, looking in my face  
With kind and pitiful eyes, that saw this mood  
Was but a ripple on the sea of woe  
That drowned my soul at parting with my lord.  
One brief and firm embrace, and he was gone.  
I saw his war-car smoking down the vale,  
Saw through the dust the scythes flash in the sun.  
Then anguish came upon me suddenly ;  
But with a stubborn strength I forced it down.  
I took the smiling Gladys in my arms,  
And called my trembling maids, and followed on

After the wheels of Owain. As we went  
We met the startled morning, freshly sprung  
From the low hills above the Roman camp ;  
While yet our weary way was half untrod,  
Its burning wings had broadened into noon  
Above our throbbing temples ; and or ere  
Our dusty sandals threaded all the vale,  
It passed away behind on curving plumes  
And hovered in the west. And now we saw  
Wide opened to the East a level tract  
Through which the Sabren flowed, her unseen course  
Traced by her misty breath that rising filled  
The empty spaces of the cooling air.  
There, at the valley's mouth, we paused ; and climbed  
A pine-fringed knoll, that like a sentinel  
Kept watch to rearward of the Cymric host.  
Mid-distant, by the river's farther shore,  
On a green slope that faced the setting sun,  
The Romans stood : fast-rooted like a rock  
On which our surging ranks dissolved in vain.  
Again, again the sparkling crest of spears  
Arose and flew upon the solid mass ;  
But harmless as the scattered spray they fell  
Upon the close-locked shields, that like the scales

Of some huge monster guarded from assault  
The legioned life within. Once and again  
Our valiant Cymri charged ; once and again  
Fell back repulsed and baffled to the ford.  
There in the hollow, small as ants, they moved ;  
And as we watched a sudden shaking seemed  
To seize and scatter them ; whereat my maids,  
All but the noble-hearted Angharad,  
Wrung helpless hands and shrieked that all was lost.  
But I, who marked still steadfast in the rear  
My Owain's chariot, notable afar  
By the white steeds whose manes flowed terrible  
As meteors in the air, I trembled not,  
But saw a martial method in the change.  
And soon, more swift than speech, the scythed cars  
Dashed from the rear between the opening lines,  
And wheeling southwards on the Roman flank,  
Cut deep into the legion's quivering heart.  
The shouts came faintly to our ears across  
The misty meadows ; and above the mist,  
Small on the dark side of the distant hill,  
Where the dim shadow of a purple cloud  
Flitted across, I saw the snow-white manes  
And the blue glitter of the well-known sword.

The legion wavered ; and the serried ranks  
Of shining helms fell back in hollow curves,  
As fall the ripples of a sullen pool  
Where, by the side, a runnel hastens in.

Then for a moment glancing down to still  
The restless wailings of the drowsy child,  
I lost the links of movement ; and before  
My dazzled eyes could fit themselves again  
To take the farther range, the snow-white manes  
And the blue glitter of the well-known sword  
Were lost, all trampled out confusedly  
Like sparks upon the ground. Then wild with fear  
I cast the child into her nurse's arms,  
And springing down upon the level plain  
Flew towards the river through the misty meads.

I ran as in a dream, on feet that felt  
Nor weight nor weariness ; but only seemed  
Like wings to the great fear that maddened me  
And drove me forward. Now the mangled ground,  
Furrowed and stamped where many wheels and feet  
Had gathered closer, brought me to the ford ;  
There, girding up my robes and flinging off  
The slippery sandals from my feet, I plunged  
Into the stream ; whose chilly waters numbed

My trembling ankles. Yet I struggled on  
And gained the farther shore; without a pause  
Pressed through the clustered footmen; flew between  
The trampling horse; threaded the perilous space,  
Narrow and shifting, 'twixt the rolling cars;  
Caught at the bridles of the tossing heads  
That scattered showers of foam, and held them back,  
And sprang between the cruel hoofs and wheels;  
Deaf to the friendly shouts of those before,  
More deaf to the fierce threats of those behind,  
Warning me back. Above the thundering cars,  
Clearer than all the clashing of the steel,  
And more articulate than any speech,  
I heard the terror whisper in my heart  
That shaped its voice like Owain's dying moan.  
But when I gained the spot where glittered last  
His waving sword against the dark hill side,  
The Romans had arisen, and charging down  
The western slopes had left the southern strewn  
With the dread wreck of battle. There I found  
Him whom I sought; but ask not what I found.  
For while I speak once more the darkness comes,  
The black, black night that then fell suddenly  
On my stunned heart and brain."

Hereat she paused

And reeling, seemed about to swoon away,  
While her dark hair swept forward heavily.  
But thrusting Julius' friendly arm aside,  
She leant her trembling frame against the tree,  
Flung the long locks behind, and gasped for breath ;  
Then gathering up her forces spoke again,  
With pale but resolute lips.

“ I knew no more,

Till the soft tears of pitying twilight fell  
Upon my face, and I awoke again.  
As one who walking in a pleasant place,  
In midst of sunshine, flowers, and singing birds,  
And murmuring happy fancies to himself,  
Suddenly falls into a treacherous pit  
Hid by the smiling herbage, and drops down  
Mangled and stunned upon the dreary floor ;  
So from my pleasant path of life I fell,  
Suddenly fell ; and as that wretched man  
After a while begins to stir again,  
Painfully moves his miserable limbs,  
And marvels at the darkness and the pain ;  
Then with dim eyes up-gazing to the brink,  
Where the wide heavens show dwindled to a point,

By slow degrees draws through his shattered sense  
The notion of his fall, so I awoke,  
So slowly traced my anguish to its cause.  
But in the midst of misery, the thought  
Of Gladys glided in athwart my brain,  
Even as a lonely star might glide across  
That far-off speck and aperture of sky,  
Revealed by darkness to the hapless man,  
And seem to lure him from his last despair.  
I looked around me ; but the deepening night  
Hid all the distance ; save that far below  
A trembling gleam showed where the Sabren fled  
To hide her blood-stained waters in the sea ;  
Save that beyond the stream the heavens turned pale  
Behind the spectral pines upon the knoll,  
Whose dusky arms seemed beckoning me to leave  
The lifeless sire, and seek the living child.  
Then down the slopes I went as in a dream,  
Slow stumbling through the dark among the tracks  
Of wheels and hoofs, slipping in blackened pools  
That made me shudder, till I reached the ford  
And climbed the knoll ; but Gladys was not there,  
Nor yet my maids. But even then my heart  
Held its dull peace ; and still as in a dream

I struggled up the windings of the vale  
Through that long autumn night, until the dark  
Began to fold and gather here and there,  
Showing the blasted oak upon the crag,  
Above our mountain home. Then in that hour—  
That grey, foreboding hour when happy men  
Fondly deceive their souls, and dream they hear  
In the faint sounds and movements that begin  
On every side to stir the quiet air,  
Earth's drowsy answer to the call of hope  
That wakens her to greet the rising sun ;—  
In that most dreary hour I passed within  
The desolate door, and trod the silent hall,  
Where never more should Owain's voice be heard,  
Where never more his feet should come again.  
Yet this I rather said for her who swooned  
The yester-eve beside her husband's corse,  
Than felt as she who mourned his loss to-day ;  
For from the dust my soul had risen to leave  
The lifeless sire, and seek the living child.

“ Close in the corner of an inner room  
A figure crouched, that neither moved nor spoke,  
Yet looked like Angharad,—my fairest maid,  
Promised to valiant Cynfran as his bride,—

Like, yet how different ! For some ghastly change  
Had passed upon her : some mysterious cloud  
Hung on her face, and dulled the laughing eyes  
That once were clear as day. Yet from behind  
That conscious cloud there sparkled out the light  
Of a most innocent, indignant soul.

Some wrong that writhed out of the reach of words,  
Yet still clung close to loathing memory,  
So seemed to gnaw her heart, I feared to ask  
Its shape or name ; and for a moment's space  
My toiling anguish paused to pity hers.

Then did I speak to her ;—‘ O Angharad,  
O Angharad the clear-eyed, answer me !  
Where is my child ? ’ Slowly she lifted up  
Her heavy looks and brought them to my face ;  
So,—poring on it like a child who pores  
On a familiar form in some disguise,—  
Found me at length behind my mask of woe,  
And in her startled glance I read my change.  
Then, maddened with suspense, again I cried,  
‘ By the three sacred rays which Einig saw  
I charge thee,—tell where I may find my child.’  
‘ I know not,’ she made answer, sinking back  
Into that sullen, self-devouring mood :

Then bowing down her face upon her knees  
Till the long waves of shining chestnut hair  
Fell round her like a veil, she spoke again :—  
‘ O thank the gods that she is yet a child.’

“ I did not weep ; but close and closer still  
The leaden weight pressed down my sinking brain,  
The senseless slumber lay upon my soul :  
A slumber broken by the mournful cries  
And wild upbraiding of some second self  
That dwelt within the tomb of what I was.  
Life ceased to flow like as the Hebsta flows,—  
Now over sounding falls, now in calm pools,  
Here glancing in the sun, o’ershadowed there  
Below the hanging woods, but always seen,  
And always linked in one unbroken course ;—  
It fell apart disjointed from itself.  
Even as the Mellta, that mysteriously  
Slips underground,—to pour her amber waves  
Through caverns where the cheerful beams of  
day  
Come never, issuing to the light again  
Unlooked for in some far-off valley’s side ;—  
So did the mournful current of my days  
Begin to lose its sequence in the dark,

And spring to daylight once again, at wide  
And unexpected intervals, as now.

“ In that same hour I turned my weary feet,  
Forth wandering, all unwitting where I went,  
To find my child. Twelve times the flowing sap  
Has settled in a larger ring around  
The girth of the great forest trees ; yet still  
I seek my child, and still have found her not,  
Thus still I wander on, unwitting where,  
To find my child : and this is all my tale.”

She ceased : the last vibration of her voice  
Died out upon the air, that settled smooth  
In utter silence. Then that silence roused  
The listeners like a trumpet call ; for lo !  
They had not seen the setting sun withdraw  
The level ray that gilt the grassy ridge  
When the sad mother’s dolorous tale began.  
They had not heard the faint, unfinished songs,  
The small, soft rustlings of the wings and feet,  
Of nesting birds among the underwood ;  
Nor felt the chill, moist air, whose poisoned robe  
Was folding close and closer round their limbs.  
For far away to other scenes and times  
That mournful voice had lured their pitying souls.

So that the vacant senses left behind  
Saw not, nor heard, nor felt. Now with a start  
The wandering powers were at their post and knew  
That night had fallen.

Then did the Maccabee,  
True to himself, shake off the irksome weight  
Of powerless pity ; and with a light spring  
Mounted the crômlech, crying,

“ It were well  
To find our pathway to the sheltering hut  
Ere the last streak of day fades in the West.  
This is the mound, the altar, and the tree  
Of which prince Brân at parting spake to us.  
‘ Stand on the stone,’ he said, ‘ and looking North  
Mark well the western edge of the huge oak  
That faces you. So marking, you shall find  
A wound upon the bark ; telling the spot  
Whence in old times a Druid’s hook, they say,  
Severed the sacred plant. If a keen eye  
Take aim through this, so shall it deftly light  
At a league’s distance on a crooked ash  
That bends beyond the corner of a wood.  
Thither press on, and you shall find a track  
Leading to shelter and a faithful friend.’

But if we tarry longer, I misgive,  
'Twill take a keener eye than mine to light  
At a league's distance upon anything."

" I come," said Julius, paying slender heed,  
And thinking more of mournful Guendolen,  
Who now again was sitting motionless  
As first they saw her ; her close folding arms  
Clasping her knees ; her coldly woful looks  
Silently saying,—' This my grief is mine  
And not another's, therefore stand aloof.'

But Julius sighed and laid a gentle hand  
On the dark wreaths of her disordered hair,  
Saying,—" My daughter, may the Highest One,  
He whom your bards and Druids blindly serve,  
Bless thee, and bring thee all thy heart's desire."  
Then paused, withdrew his hand, and spake again :  
" The All-mighty is All-merciful. Our pain  
Is not His pleasure. Love, and joy, and peace,  
Such are His whispers in the soul of man,  
Heard in all times though seldom understood.  
But now the whisper swells into a voice  
That tops all sound beside. For wondrous things  
Have happened in the far-off Summer-land  
That lies in light beyond the central sea,

The land whence sprung the fathers of your race.  
There God, a suffering man with suffering men,  
Has walked the weary pathways of the world,  
Alluring by majestic tenderness  
All longing, restless souls to lean on Him.  
Behold ! He beckons now : the mighty hand  
That in its secret hollow holds the sea,  
Scoops out the heavens, feeds the fire of the sun  
And rolls the planets, is a friendly hand  
That delicately guides thy small concerns.  
It flings away the robe of mystery,  
Lessens itself to suit thy feeble grasp,  
And fain would lift the burden of thy eares.  
Trust it : ay, trust the skilful hand of Him  
Who made thee : trust the pitiful heart to which  
Thou art more dear than Gladys to thine own.  
Speak to Him now : He needs no noise of words,  
But hears the silent wishes of the heart.  
He knows the darkened eyes and erring feet  
Are weak to find the way to His embrace,  
And comes Himself to fetch the wanderer home." "  
She answered nothing, and the drooping wing  
Of silence sank again. Then a low sob  
Lifted it tremblingly, her fingers loosed

Their straining clasp, and all her sultry griefs  
Broke up in showers of kindly tears that fell  
Unseen, behind the shadow of her arms.

Then Julius feared to touch the tender bloom  
Of these first-fruits, or mar with meddling words  
The happy wonder of a waking soul ;  
And therefore sealed his lips, except to say,  
“ Farewell ; but when this moon that glimmers now  
A narrow crescent through the shifting clouds,  
Has rounded to the full, her light shall fall  
Upon the path that leads us here again.”

Meanwhile the keen eye of the Maccabee  
Had found the ancient wound upon the bark,  
And deftly lighted on the bending ash  
That marked the promised shelter ; and he stood  
Impatient to depart. But when he heard  
Julius’ farewell,—as ever quick to feel  
The need and find the expedient of the hour,—  
He turned with hasty gestures to his friend,  
Saying in voluble phrases of the Greek  
That wrapt the sense from Guendolen,

“ Not so :  
All thou hast taught, all she has learned were vain,  
If now we leave her in the wilderness

Alone, and at the mercy of herself,  
The prey of dark conceits. Didst thou not mark  
How at the very outset of her tale  
She spake of Llyr as grandsire to her lord ?  
If this be so, his sire was Brân himself ;  
His brother, royal Caradoc ; and thus  
The shelter we are bound for were as fit,  
As open, for her homeless head as ours."

" Yea, true," said Julius meekly, " I am shamed  
Of this my blindness. Verily, it is hard  
To balance the nice scales of thought and fact,  
Action and meditation. Evermore  
We find that we have cast a grain too much  
Into the right or left, and this or that  
Flies to the beam."

But waiting not to hear  
These fine discernments delicately drawn,  
Thus spake the Maccabee to Guendolen,  
" O Lady, with a brother's faithful heart  
I crave to serve thee. Far across the sea  
A gentle wife thinks of me ; lovely babes  
Are taught to lisp their absent father's name.  
Therefore my heart grows tender at the thought  
Of sorrows such as thine. We go from hence

To find a friendly roof in yonder wood.'

Now hearken to me, Lady ; come with us ;

And change this wildly-mournful solitude

For kindly faces of thy fellow men."

She fastened on his face a searching gaze  
As thus he spoke. Then when he ceased arose,  
And girt the ruined richness of her robes  
About her stately form ; saying the while,—  
" Yea, I will follow : all my soul is bent  
To learn the worship of the God you serve.  
But pass before ; and while I follow on,  
Speak not nor look behind ; for if perchance  
The hateful thing should track me, I must face  
Its last assault alone."

She waved them on,  
And they set forward. But a shadow sat  
Upon the Maccabee ;—" Far be it from me,"  
He cried, as Julius joined him on the path,  
" To soften down, as thou, the hellish freaks  
Of their false priests and falser gods ; as if  
Falsehood were but another name for truth ;  
Foulness for purity ; blood-thirstiness  
For love and pity. Rather let my arm  
Strike boldly at the bitter root, and cast

The impostors down, and grind their trickeries  
To powder, scattered on the ruthless winds.  
Then room were made to point the people's eyes  
Up to Jehovah in the heaven of heavens."

" Right :" said the elder, " right yet wrong, my son.  
Show me the priest whose wicked wilfulness  
Misleads the people,—such, alas ! there are ;—  
Who knows the inner truth that contradicts  
The outer lie he puts into its place ;—  
Yet for his own base ends withholds the truth  
And sets the lie upon a pedestal  
For men to worship, offering at its shrine  
Poor bootless prayers ;—and I will show to thee  
A man on whom I will not spare to heap  
The curses of the law ; the wrath of Him  
Whose voice re-echoed through the temple courts,  
' Woe unto you, blind leaders of the blind.'  
But shall I thus assail the worshipper,  
Whose dim desires slow turning after good,  
Urge him to bow before the specious thing  
That has usurped its place ? who knowing not,  
Save in some half-drowned sense or memory,  
His soul's true rest, hangs on the nearest prop  
That promises support ? Shall I rush forth

And hurl him from his knees, as if I scorned  
His sacred yearnings ? Shall I snatch the straw  
Out of the drowning hand, before I guide  
Its eager clasp to the far-reaching boughs  
Of the strong tree of Life ? ”

“ To hear thee speak,”  
The younger answered, “ one would think that all  
The vilest worship of the vilest gods  
Of heathendom, were something sound at base ;  
A gentle error, not a damning sin.  
Bold-faced rebellion, foaming out its shame  
In loud defiance, ranks in thy soft phrase  
As something specious. Thou would’st call the swine  
That tramples in the mire the tender plant,  
The prop that stays its weakness. Thou would’st call  
The cruel reptile lurking in the reeds,  
A straw at which the drowning man may catch,  
With small advantage but as little hurt.”

“ Alas,” said Julius, “ thou but beat’st the wind ;  
Or at the best the empty robe of words  
From whence the spirit of my argument  
Flits forth unscathed, untouched, unrecognized.  
But let us tempt it back. As far from me  
As thee, to soften as thou seem’st to fear

The hellish freaks of heathendom : as if  
Falsehood were but another name for truth ;  
Foulness for purity ; blood-thirstiness  
For love and pity. Yet be well assured  
There never was successful counterfeit  
But bare a certain semblance to the true,  
Was framed on the idea of the true,  
And by that semblance and idea kept  
Its hold upon the world. The false, the foul,  
The cruel, of the heathen gods would soon  
Fall of themselves and crumble into dust ;  
But that beneath there lurks a vital Truth ;  
So strong that even the most crushing weight  
Of error heaped upon it but benumbs  
Its outer workings, cannot quench the life  
That throbs and glows within. That truth is this :—  
That there is Power above us, felt not seen :  
A Power before whose breath we are less strong  
Than the light chaff of summer threshing-floors  
Before the hurricane, a Power to which  
We owe allegiance. Let our task be this :—  
To tear asunder the corrupting veil,  
And let the struggling life escape, to find  
A home in purer forms. Meanwhile, my son,

We know not, truly, if our brother's fault  
Be gentle error or a damning sin.  
But this we know ;—that what we rightly call  
The one true knowledge of the one true God,  
Revealed to Moses, perfected in Christ,  
Is but a shadow of the Truth itself,  
A finite symbol of the Infinite.  
Yet if a symbol, one divinely given ;  
And therefore to be hoarded in our hearts  
As sacred treasure : yea, more precious far  
Than all our fine-spun after-thoughts : a thing  
In which to live our life ; or, if needs be,  
For which to die ; with holy modesty  
That dreams not we have scaled the heavens, that owns  
We see not Him who is invisible,  
Save as reflected in the small, dim glass  
Of our low thoughts ; which still is small and dim  
Though his enlightening Spirit pour thereon  
Its condescending beams. Perchance, my son,  
Our noblest thoughts of God fall farther short  
Of the pure splendours of His Infinite  
Than does the meanest heathen thought, of ours.”  
But still the other answered—“ Pardon me  
For harping still upon this weary string ;—

But speaking thus, thou mak'st our sacred ark  
That rides alone above a drowning world  
One of a happy fleet, all homeward bound.

Yea, speaking thus, may God forgive the word,  
Thou mak'st Jove true, only less true than Christ,  
Or else Christ false, only less false than Jove."

Then Julius, under breath,—“ Nay, God forbid !”  
And pausing on the rugged path he sighed,  
Sighed out of utter loneliness of soul :  
That deepest and most desert solitude,  
That farthest exile, when the chosen friend  
Is close beside, to hand, and eye, and ear,  
Yet severed from us by a boundless gulf.  
His baffled spirit stretched her empty arms,  
Despairing, to the vague and cold embrace  
Of nature ; but she held upon her way,  
Vast, inarticulate, immoveable,  
Brooding on deeper sorrows of her own.  
And darker still the sombre twilight fell ;  
The faint moon-crescent glimmered fainter still  
Behind the murky vapours ; a white bird  
Flitted half seen across the watercourse ;  
And the sad earth sighed through the fading trees  
That loomed in masses on the farther shore.

Then thought the other,—to whom Julius' mood  
Was as a colour to a blind man's eye,—  
' Something has chafed him ; let me change the  
theme.'

So when the old man turned serene looks round  
And they went forward, with a softened voice  
Began the younger :—“ Thou did'st speak anon  
To this lorn mother of some spiritual child  
Held captive in the snares of wicked men.  
Prythee, who is this maiden ? never yet  
Hast thou so much as named her name to me.”

“ Friend,” answered Julius, “ she is one of whom  
My heart speaks rather than my lips, and more  
To God than man.” “ Nay,” said the Maccabee,  
“ The nearer that a matter lies to the heart  
The fitter to be shared by the heart's friend.”

“ True,” groaned the other, “ if that your heart's friend  
Be capable to share it ; but like love,  
Friendship full oft cleaves to its opposite,  
And cleaves the closer for the difference.  
Yet in this mystery do partings lie,  
As well as meetings : dangerous variance,  
As well as safe accord : mournful farewells  
Of soul to soul across a widening gulf

As well as clasped hands and eternal vows.  
But for this girl, in whom is garnered up  
My childless heart, hers is a tale soon told,  
And since thou crav'st to hear it, I will tell.

“ She is the child of Aulus Plautius :  
The veteran general who when Llyr was king  
Beat back the British forces, and returned  
In proud ovation ; with the emperor  
Riding at his right hand ; the mellow flutes  
Warbling around ; his charger's pawing hoofs  
Deep in strewn flowers ; and far as eye could see,  
From the field of Mars on to the Capitol,  
His army, rich with trophies, myrtle-crowned,  
Pouring through ranks of shouting citizens.  
All unaware how at that very hour  
The cry of battle rang along the coasts  
Of the white island ; that the Cymrie powers  
Had risen again ; and Caradoc had won  
More than his grandsire lost.

“ Now since that day  
Has Plautius dwelt in Rome, and with him dwell  
His noble wife Pomponia, and their child,  
The bright-haired Claudia. It is said in Rome,  
She is not theirs by any tie of blood ;

But let that pass. She was a wondrous child,  
Full of still radiance. When Pomponia  
Turned from the heathen rites to worship God,  
And with a trembling heart began to break  
The mighty change to Claudia,—telling her  
Of God and Christ —or ere the child had heard  
More than the briefest outline, she arose,  
And with a calm face answered, ‘ Yea, I know :  
This is the God who hears me when I pray.  
He dwells beyond the incense and the shrines,  
And draws me closer, closer, up to Him.  
I have loved Him always, knowing not His name ;  
But now I know it I will serve Him too.’  
And this Pomponia told me ; and I came,  
Saw the fair child, spake with her, and did find  
Most surely that the Spirit of the Lord  
Had taken of His truth and shown it her  
In the transparent silence of her soul.  
But ever with most sweet humility  
She sat as at my feet, desiring still  
To learn : unguessing how I craved the while  
Rather to learn from her. So time went on ;  
And evermore the promise of her soul  
Grew riper, till I saw that she was one

Fashioned for glorious ends. But as a frost  
Desceends untimely on the buds of March,  
So did the blighting breath of a merciless world  
Fall on this flower of Heaven. Her plastic soul  
Moulded a most fair dwelling for itself.

I have no skill to paint in gaudy words  
A maiden's beauty. This is all I know ;—  
That she was lovelier than the loveliest,  
As gentle and as graceful as a fawn,  
As soft in tint and outline as a flower ;  
And the still star-like radiance of her looks  
Maddened all Rome with love, weary to death  
Of brazen brows, and lavish smiles, and eyes  
Bright with base meanings. So while yet a child  
Her father promised her without her will  
To Pudens of the order of the knights :  
The best of all her suitors ; yet as far  
From Claudia as a muddy pool is far  
From the pure planet shining on its face.  
Then when with quiet tears and earnest words  
She craved to be left free, he turned his wrath  
On me and on Pomponia ; swore by Jove  
That we had plagued her fancy with crude fears  
Bred of our gloomy faith, and bade me go

And never more darken his palace-doors.  
As for his noble wife, he prisoned her  
In her own dwelling, holding her apart  
From converse with the darling of her soul.  
And now the illustrious lady's enemies,—  
For many hated her, whose holy light  
Reproached their darkness,—finding that she lay  
Under the fierce displeasure of her lord,  
Took heart against her, who had seemed before  
Too high a quarry for their mean assaults.  
Now they accused her that she had embraced  
A foreign superstition, and required  
That she should answer for it to her lord.  
So Plautius, following the ancient law,  
Summoned her kindred, and before them all  
Tried her for life and fame. But in the end,  
The majesty and meekness of her words,  
Given in that hour by Him who ever walks  
Beside His chosen in the baffled fire ;  
And her unspotted life, that shone the more  
The more they pried into her secret ways ;  
So wrought upon him that he cast aside  
The accusers' charge, pronounced her innocent  
Of any wrongful courses, and restored

His favour to her. But still resolute  
That Claudia shall not suffer further taint  
From this new faith, he holds her sternly yet  
From her illustrious mother; circles her  
With gay companions, fills her nights and days  
With songs and dances, garlands, gay attire,  
And passionate wooers whispering vanity  
In her unguarded ears. Then say, my son,  
Have I not lost my child?—and is she not  
Held captive in the snares of wicked men?"

"Alas, my father, thou hast cause to grieve,"  
The other answered; "'tis a grievous thing  
To see a dear soul for the which Christ died  
Tossed as a plaything in the enemy's hand.  
Yet what were thine own words to Guendolen?—  
That 'the all-seeing One, who gave the child  
Still has her in His ken though far from thine.'  
Thus medicine thine own grief: remembering too  
That even our Captain's armour was annealed  
By fiery conflict in the wilderness,  
Then how much more should ours? If, as thou  
deem'st,  
She has been fashioned for a glorious end,  
Most needful was it that her spiritual strength

Be tested sharply. Yet I marvel much  
What glorious end she can be fashioned for,  
A mere, weak woman."

When he heard these words  
A slow smile breaking over Julius' soul  
Rose like the dawn and overflowed his face,  
As thus he answered,—

" Marvellest thou, my son ?  
Truly the world and all the ways of God  
Are full of marvels. Not the least is this,  
That all the mightiest forces that compel  
Matter and spirit in their destined grooves  
Are silent and unseen. " Perchance, my son,  
Your ' mere, weak woman ' may be one of these.  
Truly she is the mother of us all.  
All noble thoughts and pure imaginings,  
Incarnated in her, swell in her soul  
In darkness, till the growing time is ripe  
For birth in the activities of man.  
Yea, it is possible the Wisest One  
May not have erred in trusting to her hands  
The fortunes of our race, trusting to her  
The pregnant, pliant years of infancy."

So spake the generous Julius ; while a spark

That almost looked like scorn brightened his eyes,  
And to his words the voluble Maccabee  
Answered in such unanswerable sort  
He could but smile once more and hold his peace.



## P A R T I V.

Now as they talked, a turning in the path  
Revealed a crooked ash which bent beyond  
The corner of the wood. Cheered by the sign  
They crossed the stream, and round about the tree  
Searched the close thicket. But the place was dark,  
Dark with the double shade of eventide  
And overhanging trees, and baffled them.  
Till bending to the ground the Maccabee  
Found a faint track, and following the track  
The trees withdrew, leaving a level turf  
Between their ranks, grateful to way-worn feet.  
Now too their ears grew happy with a sound  
That made them hasten, gathering as they went

The growing clue, until at length they saw  
A rustic lodge, dim-outlined in the dusk,  
But all alive within with rosy light  
That sparkled through each crevice in the walls,  
And drew them on the faster. From this lodge  
The music came ; which as they drew more near  
Divided to a double melody :  
The voice of one who made herself a child  
To please her babe, and the babe's dovelike voice  
In wordless answers. Then the Maccabee,  
Heart-tendered with the thought of those at home,  
Crept noiselessly towards the wedge of light  
That split the darkness near the unlatched door ;  
And Julius following, they both stood mute  
Peering within. Unconscious of their gaze  
A peasant woman stood before the hearth,  
Erect, elastic ; and her rounded arms  
Shone in the firelight as she tossed a babe,  
That held its fluttering breath at each ascent,  
But crowed and babbled as her careful arms  
Caught it again in safety to her breast.  
Again, again, she tossed the laughing child,  
And answered it in baby-syllables,  
With merry turns of voice and flashing smiles.

But soon the child's voice faltered, and soft clouds  
Began to gather in its drooping eyes.  
At which the mother ceased her merriment  
And pressed it to her bosom, sinking down  
On a low stool. Then waving to and fro  
With slumberous movement, sang a lullaby  
Framed in her first delight of motherhood.

“ Aye, sleep, my darling, sleep !  
Thy tender soul soon tires  
Of this our life. Though large and bright to me,  
’Tis small and dim to thee,  
Fresh from the Heaven to which my soul aspires,  
But has forgotten long.  
And therefore often thou withdraw’st and diest  
Out of thy little temple here, and flyest  
Back to thy glorious home ;  
Beneath whose dome  
O happy, swift-winged, homeward flying swallow,  
Thou hast thy lasting rest.  
A softer, fairer nest  
Than even this which lies upon my breast  
So vacant and so still.  
But over which I will,

Whilst thou art absent, faithful watches keep.  
And all the time thy blissful flight I'll follow  
In a soft murmured song.

“ Aye, sleep, my darling, sleep !  
I see thee mounting far.  
The light grows brighter on thy earnest wings  
And richer radiance flings  
About thy path. Above the highest star  
Thou risest easily,  
Upward, still upward, through the pale blue  
foldings  
Of the air-curtains, till the golden mouldings  
Of the ever open door  
Glitter before  
Thy quiet eyes, undazzled yet enraptured.  
And through that open door  
The angel-children pour  
Their silvery songs of welcome evermore.  
And now they crowd around  
Their newly lost and found  
To question if thy homely service keep  
Thee longer from them, sorrowfully captured  
By time, and sin, and me.

“ Aye, sleep, my darling, sleep !  
Sun thy chilled soul awhile  
In the warm splendour of the living ray  
Which makes eternal day.  
Yea ! sun thyself in the life-giving smile  
Of the eternal love.  
But O ! I charge thee ! do not fondly hearken  
To those bright playmates’ pleadings : my eyes darken  
With undropped tears, to think  
How life would shrink  
To nothingness if thou wert gone for ever.  
Tell them,—thy course though low  
Slips with a softened flow  
Through banks of sweetness theirs can never know ;  
Tell them,—thou hast but done  
As did the Holy One ;  
Who left the calm of Heaven that he might reap  
Out of the fields of sorrow, joy that never  
Could else be stored above.

“ Aye, sleep, my darling, sleep !  
Meanwhile thy silent lips,  
Left open like the cage to tempt the dove,  
Are eloquent with love.

And from their pure, fresh fountain my soul sips  
Lessons of peace and rest.  
From these dear arms, for ever fondly turning,  
Even in slumber, towards me, I am learning  
In every time and state  
Meekly to wait  
Upon the care of the eternal Father ;  
And to feel after Him  
When all besides is dim,  
When in a sea of doubt my fancies swim  
And faith's strong arm grows numb.  
When hurtful phantoms come  
And through the curtains of thy slumber peep,  
Thou dost not struggle from me, but dost rather  
Cling closer to my breast."

As the song ceased, a heavy hasty step  
Came crushing through the brushwood ; and Cadair,  
The faithful herdsman of the captive prince,  
Strode sternly towards the pilgrims. But the ring  
On Ilid's finger cleared his brow, and turned  
The fierce demand that started to his lips  
Into a cordial welcome. At his voice  
Estrildis rose, laid down the sleeping babe,

And flew to greet him, glancing bashfully  
At those two strangers.

But as thus she came,

The meaning of her countenance was changed,  
And with a startled look that overshot  
The pilgrims and Cadair, she fixed her gaze  
On something in the rear. Then,—as they turned  
To see the scope of those wide-opened eyes,—  
She sprang beyond them all, fell down before  
The feet of Guendolen, embraced her knees,  
And cried aloud amidst her happy tears ;—  
“ O is it thou ? my lady Guendolen !  
How have I prayed for this ! and wilt thou deign  
To shelter 'neath our roof the stately head  
That I have mourned as houseless, bare to all  
The buffets of the storm without, within.  
My soul is lost in joy and gratitude  
That cannot speak in words.”

Then Guendolen

Lifted her up and pressed her in her arms  
With kind caresses ; saying,—“ Yea, I come,  
But not as deigning, Estrild ; not to 'bow  
A stately head : that pride has passed away.  
The father-God has found me : He has sent

His servants and has brought me home to Him.  
If He himself walked as a man with men  
Along the common pathways of the world,  
What then am I, to wrap my wounded soul  
In solitary state of proud disdain,  
And waste to death away from all my kind ?  
Therefore I leave the desolate wilds wherein  
My soul has been the prey of evil thoughts.  
Sorrow may still be mine, but not despair.  
For if I find my child or find her not,  
She is not lost ; and in the after-world  
Gladys shall nestle in my arms again.  
And as for thy lost daughter," as she spoke  
She turned to Julius, " she whom thou dost mourn  
As captive in the snares of wicked men,  
The light that blends the future with the past  
And makes one lucid present of our lives  
Has shone for me, and shows that in the hour  
I clasp my child, thine will be rescued too.  
Or here or in the blessed after-world  
The parents and the children meet again."

Here then in Cadair's hut for five long years  
The pilgrims made their central home ; while far  
Along the terraced mountain-paths, and down

The deep secluded vales ; over bleak heaths,  
And through the tangled marshes of the coast ;  
From southern Isea by the tawny sea  
To where the Sacred Island fronts the north ;  
From th' eastern streams to where the unknown main  
Breaks on the western shores ; their patient feet  
Passed and repassed, blessing the land they trod.  
From time to time, with many an anxious space  
Lengthening between, came news from distant Rome.  
Letters from Miriam, full of tender talk  
Of babes and home and kindred. Letters too  
From Brân the prince and Caradoc the king,  
Who ere a year had passed avowed himself  
A willing vassal of the conquering Christ,  
And passed through mystic waters to His side :  
Letters from all save Claudia. But of her  
Nothing but dubious rumours of the snares  
That thickened round her feet : nothing to cheer  
The heart of Julius, who still mourned for her  
As one who mourns an only, darling child  
Dying unsuccoured on a distant shore.

But whether they rejoiced for Caradoc,  
Or wept for Claudia, still their steadfast souls  
Were true to their high calling ; still they sought

The scattered Cymri in their secret haunts,  
And found them stern and sad, rent off by force  
From the old rule and worship of the land ;  
Scorning their conquerors much ; but scorning more  
The childish herd who, dazzled by success,  
Grovelled before them ; scorning most of all  
The few, base-hearted, howe'er nobly born,  
Who, guessing at the issue ere the fight,  
Had knit a shameful treaty with the foe ;  
And now reaped golden harvests from the fields  
Watered with Cymric blood.

In such a mood

The pilgrims found the noblest of the land :  
Whether the simple herdsman who scarce knew  
His grandsire's name, or prince whose long descent  
Baffled the practised memories of the bards :  
Herdsman or prince, still noblest of the land.  
And fitting well their words to such a mood,  
And fitting well their actions to their words,—  
Not by a painful piecing here and there,  
But by the easy outgrowth of the heart,—  
They drew from many a deeply wounded soul  
The venom of its misery, and poured  
Into its smarting hurts a triple balm :

The balm of trust in the Eternal Power  
That fashions all things to their fittest end :  
Of trust in the Eternal Love that lives,  
And dies, and rises ever in the worlds ;  
That late had taken human form to live  
More lovingly among us, and to die  
More sadly for us, and to rise again  
More radiantly before us : and of trust  
In the Eternal Holiness which breathes  
A rarer life within the soul, nor rests  
Till all the being is attuned to God.

And ever as they taught would Julius hang  
His teaching on the teachings of the bards ;  
Would note the solid beams that still upheld  
Their tottering temple, and essay to drive  
The nail of doctrine in the surest place.  
While, true as Julius to the differing type,  
The Maccabee tore down the old beliefs,  
And built the shining palace of the King  
Sheer from the earth on unencumbered ground,  
With no misgivings of the depths below.  
Yet not in craft, but by a natural choice  
Thus did the pilgrims. Even as the pine,  
Shooting abruptly to the gracious sun.

Fringes his spiry height with russet cones ;  
While standing in close brotherhood, the oak,  
Slow-rising on his broadened base of roots,  
Thoughtfully bends his knotted arms, and moulds  
A polished acorn finely here and there.

So each was faithful to his proper trust ;  
So each was fruitful in his proper kind.  
And as they passed about the Cymric wilds  
They sowed immortal seed. But then as now  
Not all the soil was fruitful. Then as now  
The many who with open hearts embraced  
The heavenly message, seemed but few to those  
Who held them closely barred. For some were loath  
To satisfy the hunger of their souls  
With any Bread of Life unless they knew  
The title to the field where grew the wheat,  
Though all the while the inner instinct cried,  
“ Alas ! I perish while thou cavillest.”  
Some closed their hearts through jealous reverence  
For all their fathers reverenced of old.  
Unmindful that the present sees the past  
Such as it would, and throws a shifting light  
Now here, now there, upon the narrowing track  
Unrolled behind, while vaster intervals

Lie buried in the shade. Unmindful too  
That not the distant years that are no more,  
But these, the very days in which we live,  
Are earth's old age :—that not our sires but we  
Are the true ancients, on whose hoary heads  
Time heaps his snows. But more, even as now,  
Held back through utter earthliness : they saw  
No beauty in the things unseen, nor felt  
Their thrilling touch reach to the inmost soul,  
Nor heard their still small voice, that overtops  
To hearing ears the thunders of the world.

Thus through the mourning land the pilgrims went,  
And on her mountains swathed in tearful mists  
Their soiled and weary feet were beautiful.  
But in the midst of mighty thoughts, and aims  
That stretched beyond the confines of the world,  
They still remembered Guendolen, and still  
Sought for her long-lost child. Yea, more than once,—  
When worn with months of pilgrimage they came  
To rest awhile within the herdsman's hut,  
Where still she dwelt with Estrild and Cadair,—  
Some glimpse of gold upon a maiden's head  
Shining among the dark Silurian girls,  
As shines some sunny-blossomed tree among

Its sombre woodland peers, turned them aside  
To learn its owner's history. And in days  
So gloomed with exile, treachery, and war,  
Full many a Cymric orphan might be found  
Whose brief life held a world of mystery.  
Whose memory faintly traced benignant forms  
That moved and smiled about her infant years,  
Then slipped into the dark and came no more.  
But ever as they searched into the tale  
Some ruthless fact destroyed the lengthening clue,  
And fair-haired Gladys, almost grasped, was gone.

Meanwhile how slowly crept the days, the months,  
The fearful years to Clandia, far away  
Within the wicked city of the South.  
For on her shrinking spirit closely pressed  
The evil powers : the creeping hosts which haunt  
The lower grounds of our frail being, and those  
Whose proud wings darken all the upper air  
Where the mind breathes. Not only in her home  
The shadows deepened on her daily life,  
The snares grew thicker round her trembling feet ;  
But all the broad horizon of the times  
Now gathered blackness. Vilest cruelty  
And viler luxury sapped the state, till Rome

Became one ghastly pitfall, ill-concealed  
By glittering shows. The dull-souled Claudius  
Had passed away ; and in his stead arose  
A madman by whose whitest deeds the worst  
Wrought by his sire seemed pure and merciful ;  
Yet the degenerate city fawned and crouched  
At Nero's feet. An ever-dwindling few,  
Still faithful to the spirit of the past,  
Might worship virtue secretly and mourn  
The apostate times. But growing throngs on throngs,—  
Senators, ladies of the noblest lines,  
Knights of great name, rich freedmen, and a host  
Of hired plebeians,—courted greedily  
The gilded wheels that ground them in the dust.  
In such a scene she dwelt : as much alone  
As a sane man immured with maniacs :  
And but for Him whose presence like a dove  
Brooded for ever on her troubled thoughts,  
The wild despairs and fearful merriments  
Had with a horrid fascination drawn  
Her soul into the gulf. But still through all  
His strength upheld her. Yea, at times it took  
A shape of human succour. More than once  
When her last spark of hope was almost quenched,

Her latest door of rescue seemed fast barred,  
The spirit of Brân would reach her through the dark.  
Divine her perils, and provide escape.  
Or else Pomponia by a faithful slave,  
Or by a sign when at the daily board  
They met in terror of the watchful gleam  
That shot from under Plautius' shaggy brows,  
Would warn her darling. Or more strange than all,  
Pudens himself, her dearest, worst of foes,  
Would shine as her deliverer. For the knight,—  
Though armed with all her sire's authority  
To seize on Claudia and to bear her home,  
His promised bride, spite of her wilfulness ;  
And urged yet more by his own passionate heart  
That doted on her beauty, doting still  
Through years of disappointment ;—ever found  
His resolution daunted and withheld  
As by an unseen power, so that he shrank  
Out of her sight abashed.

So passed the years,  
Four seeming endless years, since Julius went.  
And in the fifth the evil powers closed round  
Her trembling spirit for a last assault.  
The spring breathed softly on the flowery world

Around the pleasant farm at Tusculum  
Where Plautius bore her, and it seemed to melt  
The firmness of her purpose. Then a voice,  
A flattering voice, said sweetly in herself,—  
‘ Do I not wrong kind Nature ? Can it be  
That these melodious musies of the world ;  
These lovely forms and hues that swell and shine  
On every side ; these most delicious scents  
And flavours ; these caresses of the breeze,  
And of this soft turf where my limbs subside  
With such an easy languor ;—can it be  
That all these things are prophecies in vain ?  
Lo ! I have fasted many days, and made  
This fruitful world a barren wilderness ;  
But God made all things good, and good for me.  
Let me fling back the fivefold door of sense  
And look abroad ; yea, taste and handle all  
That makes life worth the living. Why ? my heart,  
Why wast thou framed so softly, but to take  
Impression from another, stronger heart ?  
When Pudens speaks, why does my every nerve  
Thrill at his voice ? Who strung my being thus ?  
Not I but God ; Whom yet I think to serve  
By flat denial of the tender claim.

If Pudens' love were like the lawless love  
Of others, there were cause to shrink from it ;  
But is he not my own betrothed, and I  
Bound to him by the will of Plautius,  
Whom God has set above me as my sire ?  
My disobedience and my wilfulness  
Drive him to deeper darkness, make him hate  
The light that leads me from him ; but methinks,  
My hand in his upon the path of life,  
He were a ready convert to my zeal.'

And Clandia listened while the flattering voice  
Poured on, with many a pensive pause between,  
Its subtle music in her secret ear.  
Music more ravishingly sweet than songs  
Of the shy bird whose fitful, luscious notes  
Thrill the rich twilights of the early June.  
And as she listened her young heart confessed  
Its weakness, and implored her to relent.  
But dumbly resolute her spirit fell  
Before the unseen shrine, and rose again  
Renerved and vigorous, armed with holy thoughts.  
Then thus she answered to the tempting voice :—  
‘ Nay, liar as thou wast from evermore,  
Man lives not by the lifeless bread alone,’

But by the living word. Each several sense  
May revel in a full satiety,  
And yet the essence of the man grow lean  
And starve to perishing. And each may lack  
Its object, yet the inner soul rejoice  
In rich abundance of delight and peace.

But one thing thou say'st truly. God has made  
All Nature good ; yea, good for me, for all :  
Good, not the best : a more transcendent good  
He sets before the senses of the soul :  
To grow through discipline of loss and pain,—  
Yea, may be through a discipline of joy,—  
Into His likeness. Dost thou mock at me ?  
O cruel tempter ! asking of my heart—  
Why not for *thee* this discipline of joy ?  
My heart is weak and cannot answer thee ;  
But my soul answers boldly to thy face,  
I know not ; but I know that earthly joy  
For me as yet is a forbidden thing :  
A blooming fruit which my rash hand would crush  
To bitter ashes. Wherefore get thee hence.'

The tempting voice that spoke within her heart  
Was silent after this a little space.  
The days passed on, the heavy April rains

Saddened the skies, and all her spirit sank  
In chill depression. Then it spoke again :  
No more in flattering tones, but with a hard,  
Metallie ring of self-abandonment :—

‘ Yea, ’tis too true. I erred, wooing myself  
To taste the sweetness I must never know.  
I am a miserable, orphaned wretch  
Without a home, a country, or a name.  
Doubtless my Maker has forgotten me.  
What boots to Him my petty faithfulness ?  
I, a poor atom in the rolling mass,  
The long procession of the lives of men,  
Of what account am I in such a sum,  
Whose reckoning runs beyond my farthest thought ?  
Can the light feather of my littleness,  
Laid here or there, be strong to discompose  
The balance of the skies ? And if my God  
Cared for my safety, would He snatch away  
My main support, my father Julius,  
Yea, and Pomponia, mother of my love,  
And leave me all unguided and alone ?  
That were mere madness. Nay, it is most plain  
Sooner or later I must yield and fall.  
Then why not now, and save myself at least

The miserable dread ? Moreover too,  
If that I am, as once I fondly dreamed,  
One of His chosen children, I am safe.'

And Claudia listened while the jarring voice  
That spoke within the chamber of her heart  
Rang its harsh changes on the true and false,  
Until her soul grew dizzy and confused,  
Until the solid ground of consciousness  
Reeled round and seemed to open. Yet her soul,  
Though sinking, sank before the feet of God  
And rose re-strengthened, armed with holy thoughts.  
Then thus she answered—

‘ Dost thou think to fright  
My weakness thus, O coward enemy ?  
True, God has given His angels charge to keep  
My feet in all *my* ways, but not in *thine*.  
My way lies only where my Lord appoints,  
I may not tempt Him, choosing other paths.  
And darest thou to whisper in my heart  
He loves me not, He cares not for my love,  
My lord, who died a thousand deaths for me ?  
Nay, though He slay me will I trust in Him.  
The longest night must issue in the day,  
The morning breaks already in my soul.’

Again, a little space, the voice that spoke  
Within the chamber of her heart was still.  
The days passed on, the glorious summer burst  
From clear Italian skies, and Claudia felt  
The pride of the rich season swell within.

Then spoke the evil spirit once again.  
But neither in soft, flattering tones, nor yet  
With a harsh ring of self-abandonment ;  
But with a stirring, trumpet-like appeal,  
That echoed from some higher place and seemed  
To summon her to follow. Then she rose  
Out of her meek abasement and went up  
The mount of exaltation, while the voice  
Sounded superbly, saying in her heart,—  
‘ Methinks not many would have safely borne  
The tests that try the temper of my mind,  
Try but to prove its strength. But I begin  
At length to know myself. The softnesses  
That vanquish others come not near my soul :  
They touch but on the surface of the sense  
Like wandering birds that skim the unfathomed sea,  
But leave no trace behind. And solitude  
And sorrow do not conquer my resolves.  
I feel within a self-contenting strength

Which never fails, though all things round me fail.

It were a most ungrateful modesty  
To doubt my difference from my peers, and this  
Hints at a difference in our destinies.

'Tis said they speak of me at Cæsar's court ;  
That Martialis framed an epigram  
Touching the gold locks and the violet eyes,  
And how the Roman and the British dames  
Disputed for the honour of my birth.

Strange things have happened in these days. Perchance  
I yet might be Augusta, were it not  
For this exclusive, almost sullen faith.

But 'twere an aim beneath me : deep within  
I feel the stirring of strange powers that mock  
At thrones and empires. Rather let me be  
One of those rarely royal souls that take  
Their times and fellows captive at their will,  
By the resistless thought and wingéd word :  
Nor only so, but stretch their sovereignty  
O'er distant ages, races yet unborn.

How gloriously Apollo's statue stands !  
Fair image of the thought that fires my soul ;  
A graceful god ; divinely beautiful ;  
Divinely free from sorrow ; whom no touch

Of rude hands dare assail. But yet no need  
To quit the service of the Crucified.  
I well might worship Him in secret still :  
He looks but at the heart. These foolish gods  
Of heathendom are nought but empty names.  
Sprinkling a little incense on their shrines,  
I bind myself to nothing, while I win  
The glory of the kingdoms of the world.'

And Claudia listened while the trumpet voice  
Thus sounded in the chamber of her heart.  
Her pulse beat strangely, and the mounting blood  
Kindled her cheek and flushed her breadth of brows,  
While her eyes flashed ambition. But at length  
The wily tempter overreached himself,  
A horror seized upon her shuddering soul,  
And at the feet of God she fell, to rise  
Strong in His strength ; re-armed with holy thoughts.  
Then thus she answered to the evil one :—

‘ False, boastful spirit, all thy potent skill  
Fails to conceal thee. Thy bold blasphemy  
Stands forth unveiled and hideous, breaking through  
Its thin disguise. But were I all thou say’st,  
Would that give cause to turn against the hand  
That made me such ? Would that thy swelling words

Of flattery were true ! that I were more  
A thousand-fold than thou hast dared to say !  
Then were my life a worthier offering  
On the pure altar of the God of gods,  
My Father, my Redeemer. Yet e'en then  
How worthless a return for His vast love !  
How torn and blemished in His holy eyes !'

Then, baffled utterly, the voice was still.  
But Claudia, like to one who in the games  
Strives for the mastery with a cruel foe  
And hardly wins, lay prostrate, almost dead.  
For many days her weary soul crept through  
Its little round of duty and of love,  
Feebly, and almost blindly. But the while,  
The unseen messengers of God encamped  
About her lonely path, and held her steps,  
And strengthened and renewed her inmost heart  
With costly cordials from the heavenly store.

And in those days she prayed, and said,

" O Lord !

Thou knowest all things, Thou dost know I love  
Thee above all. Not as I ought to love,  
Not with the joyous instinct of Thy saints,  
Yet still sincerely : with a love that longs

To grow beyond its feeble self, and change  
Its languid preference for a glowing zeal.  
Yea, Lord, Thou knowest all things : Thou dost know  
I have been sorely pressed on every side :  
My feet have almost gone from under me :  
My steps have well-nigh slipped : the enemy  
Has fought against me furiously ; and though  
Thou through Thy strength hast made me conqueror,  
Yet am I sorely bruised and broken now.  
Pity me, Lord ! Thou knowest all my frame :  
Remember I am dust ! and therefore prone  
To cleave thereto. Thou who before I was  
Didst choose the mould wherein it pleased Thee  
To cast my being, Thou dost fully know  
The yearning weakness of my woman's heart.  
Save me, my Father ! save me from myself.  
Let not my foes assail me suddenly,  
While thus I languish. O most tender heart  
Of Christ ! have pity on my feebleness,  
And send me succour, ere it be too late ! ”

Meanwhile far off upon the Cymric shores,  
Through all the early and the later spring,  
And through the glowing centre of the year,  
The pilgrims pushed their peaceful victories.

But when the summer waned and all the vales  
Stood thick with golden sheaves whose tasselled heads  
Drooped in the sun, there eame a messenger  
To Cadair's hut ; where as their custom was  
At harvest tide, although with unused arms,  
They swayed the sickle in the narrow field  
Won from the forest by the herdsman's skill.

Thrice welcome was the word that messenger  
Had borne within his girdle, writ at large  
On creamy vellum, sealed with the king's seal.

“ Greetings be multiplied, O friends beloved,  
To you and to the faithful household round,  
And chiefly to our sister Guendolen.

Know that our exile ends, and that we seek  
The mist-wreathed isle again. With us our sire,  
Our queen, our daughter, and her Roman lord,  
With others dear to us and dear to you :—  
The spouse and children of the Maccabee,  
And one beside. We charge you, spread not forth  
The fame of this our eoming, lest the few  
That still have held their fealty should arise  
To greet us as their king, and shed their blood  
For that whieh cannot be ; for we have sworn.

“ Now when this reaches you at harvest time

In Cadair's hut, then know in that same day  
Our galley grates the shore. Forthwith arise :  
Beyond Trefrân, beyond Dunraven's hill  
Pursue the sunset, till a river bars  
Your farther steps. Thence turning inland track  
The river's course along a winding vale  
For nigh three leagues. Then will the valley's head  
Branch out in antlers to the right and left.  
Adown the open vale upon the right  
A still stream glides below a rock-crowned hill.  
Adown the narrow glen upon the left  
A torrent roars among huge tumbled rocks.  
Follow the torrent till its calming voice  
Yields to the murmur of a waterfall.  
Cross at the ford below the fall and search  
The wooded heights above, and you shall find  
A rustic dwelling. There await in peace  
Our coming. These are writ by Caradoc."

Speechless with joy and wonder at the first,  
Then with a tangled tide of questions, poured  
In the confused ears of the messenger,  
They heard the thrice-bless'd news, and straight arose  
To follow where the king had pointed them ;  
And Guendolen would fain have followed too,

But hearkened to their counsel, and delayed  
Until the lodge were fitted to receive  
Its royal guests.

Upon the second morn  
They tracked the vale below the rock-crowned height  
That lifted grey and ivied battlements  
Against the purple heath of distant hills.  
But since the unshorn forest filled the land  
It was but here and there between the boughs  
They caught a distant glimmer of the crags ;  
But here and there athwart the underwood,—  
Thick with tall ferns, and hemlocks silvery green,  
And flecked with flakes of sunlight,—could they see  
The glitter of the river in the sun.  
Along a rough and tangled forest-track  
They pressed with eager steps. The Maccabee  
With vigorous limbs beat back the encroaching boughs,  
Clearing the path for Julius' reverend form,  
Bent low with years and toils ; and as he snapped  
The shining toughness of the hazel stems,  
And crushed the giant hemlocks under foot,  
And flung back brief directions and replies  
To Julius in the rear, he seemed inspired  
As with a double life. Whene'er he spoke,

Although the theme were trivial, his deep tones  
Were mellow with a secret joy, his looks  
Shed on the meanest things a gorgeous light.  
A ray shot outwards from the dazzling hope  
That glorified his heart ; the hope that soon,—  
So God preserved her in the hours between,—  
His eyes so long divorced from her sweet looks,  
His ears so long bereft of her sweet voice,  
His life so long the restless widower  
Of her meek wisdom, should be filled once more  
With Miriam's presence.

So the Maccabee

Pushed onwards eagerly, and Julius' heart  
Was light, and lightly rose on wings of praise.  
To both the myriad myriad leaves and flowers,—  
Each happy with its sparkle of the sun,  
Or with its cool nest of translucent shade ;—  
And all the countless creatures of the wood,  
Insects and birds and nimble-footed things  
That glaneed across the dappled ground, or sprang  
From bough to bough, seemed like an instrument  
Of many strings, played by a master's hand,  
Tuned to the joy that sang within their hearts.

So went the dewy morning-hours. But now

The languor of the limbs began to steal  
Upon the watching brain, began to numb  
Its active workings ; till at length one thought  
Repeated in the same unvaried chime  
Was all it could. Then for the Maccabee  
Rang to and fro the king's heart-thrilling phrase :—  
“ With others dear to us and dear to you.”  
And if a playful wavelet of the stream  
Swerved to the side against a mossy root  
It softly said to him,—‘ *and dear to you.*’  
While ever in the ears of Julius rang  
“ And one beside ; ” and all the teeming life  
Within the woods re-echoed,—‘ *one beside.*’

Thus then they fared along ; and when they reached  
The antlers of the vale, the drowsy noon  
Lulled all the warm earth and the glowing sky.  
Each bush that greenly dotted the hill side  
Slept on its own blue carpeting of shade,  
And all the tender voices of the wood  
Drooped faint and low. Yet onward, onward still  
The pilgrims pushed unflagging, through the glen  
Where the white torrent poured through tumbled rocks.  
And when the creeping shadows might be seen  
To have veered a little eastward, they could hear

The deep-toned murmur of a waterfall  
Above the jangle of the nearer stream.  
And when the sun, aslant through sloping boughs,  
Trickled in jewels down the enamelled bark  
Of beech and ash and ruddy sycamore,  
They saw beyond the border of the wood  
The tremulous, silvery flashing of the fall.  
And now the path, emerging from the trees,  
Led its white track across a pebbly beach  
That floored the hollow scooped by the cascade.  
Here for a space the stream unrolled itself  
Smooth as a riband on the level stones,  
And narrowed by the drought. Behind, the cliffs  
Were streaked and stained far upwards ; for the storms  
And thaws of winter filled the hollow gulf  
With eddying whirlpools, whose long swell upswept  
Against the rocky walls, now greenly gay  
With ivy-wreaths and fringes of the fern.

## P A R T V.

HERE then the pilgrims plucked their sandals off  
And girt their garments close to cross the ford.  
Which having done they climbed the rocky heights  
And gained the upper stream. But as they searched  
Its shores, thinking to leap from rock to rock  
And gain the thicket on the farther side,  
They saw a wasted figure totter forth  
From out the thicket to the water's edge,  
And sink exhausted.

Then the Maccabee.

His muscles strung by sudden impulse, sprang  
Across the stream and hastened to the spot

Where lay the man, lost in a deadly swoon.  
His lean and haggard frame was scantily clothed  
With miserable shreds. His long black locks  
Streaked with the grey of sorrow, more than time,  
Hung by his hollow cheeks and cavernous eyes.  
But with a hand as gentle as the hand  
With which a mother tends a sickly child  
The Maccabee upraised his head from off  
The last year's leaves, saying within himself,  
‘Sure, I have seen or dreamed of such a face  
As this before?’ And as he thought thereon  
And wondered, Julius had reached the place,  
And drawn a flask of cordial from his belt,  
And touched the breathless nostrils and pale lips;  
Until at length with a long, fluttering sigh  
The eyelids opened, and the startled soul  
Looked forth bewildered. Then he filled a cup  
That hung upon the flask, and bade him drink.

Now when the wine had roused his languid pulse  
He looked from each to each with eyes that grew  
More happy as they gazed; and gazing thus  
His deathlike features quickened somewhat, while  
He faintly murmured to himself,—“Thank God  
It is no dream. These are the very men

In living shape and substance."—Then more loud,  
Yet still in weary and exhausted tones,  
Looking above,—“ O God, dweller in heaven,  
I thank Thee who hast thought upon me thus.”  
And as he spoke, they said within themselves,  
‘ Sure, I have heard or dreamed of such a voice  
As this before ? ’

But now their chiefest care  
Was how to find the woodland lodge, that so  
Ere nightfall they might safely shelter him,  
This helpless wretch, whose trust in the true God  
Made them more marvel at his misery.  
But when he heard them question of the place,  
He raised his heavy eyelids once again,  
And bade them ‘ stay him upon either side  
And he would guide them thither ; for himself  
Had dwelt there half a life-time—dwelt alone.’  
So having lightly raised his wasted frame,  
They bore him on the track he showed to them,  
And found the place they sought.

It was no hut  
Like Cadair’s, but a many-chambered hall.  
Once a fair summer-palace of the king,  
But now half ruined by neglect and time.

Yet was one chamber habitable still,  
To which he pointed them : where entering  
They found the smouldered ashes of a fire.  
Against the wall flapped sadly here and there  
Fragments of frayed, discoloured tapestry,  
And scanty wrecks of household moveables  
Stood on the sloping floor. A heap of fern  
Strewed one dark corner. A dry drinking-horn,  
An empty trencher, and a broken lamp  
Lay on a tottering table. Here they stayed  
Their steps, and Julius unclasped his scrip  
And fed the stranger ; while the Maccabee  
Revived the smouldering embers ; for the night  
Was closing, and the chilly woodland dews  
Fell through each gaping crevice in the roof.

Now when the wretched man was warmed and  
cheered,  
They asked him,—“ Who art thou ? what strange  
mishap  
Has brought thee to this miserable state ?  
And wherefore art thou dwelling thus alone ? ”  
Then thus he answered :—

“ I am Cynfrân : he  
Who met you in the marsh five summers since,

The day you landed. But I marvel not  
You should not know me."

Here he lifted up  
A pale, transparent hand against the fire,  
And faintly smiled to see the red flame dance  
Through the thin muscle, saying,—

" This frail hand  
Then swung the heaviest broad-sword easily  
As you might swing a hazel wand ; and threw  
Straight to its aim the iron-pointed spear  
For half a furlong. But 'twere long to tell  
What brought me to this miserable plight ;  
Or rather to that miserable plight  
In which you found me : all is altered now,  
Thanks be to God above. And long to tell  
Why thus I dwell in utter solitude,  
Or have been dwelling : all is altered now,  
Thanks be to God, to Llarian, and to you."

" But tell us none the less," the pilgrims said,—  
(Whose wonder grew to hear of Llarian)—  
" And tell us, more than all, how thou hast learned  
To call on the true God."

At that he dropped  
His hand and gazed into the fire's red heart

As if the story of his life were traced  
In its fantastic forms : while a fierce spark  
Shot suddenly from out his hollow eyes,  
Fading as suddenly :—

“ Ah, sirs ! ” he said,

“ You know not what you ask. I dare not turn  
The black page of the past, lest from its grave  
The spectre of revenge should rise again  
To grapple with my newly rescued soul.  
Let this suffice. I was a chieftain’s son.  
While yet a slender boy my heart rejoiced  
In battle : the shrill trumpet-call ; the roll  
Of scythed cars ; the rattle of the spear  
Against the hollow buckler ;—were to me  
Sweeter than sweetest music. The long roar  
Of host encountering host more flushed my heart  
Than softest greetings from the rosiest mouth.  
The close fight hand to hand ; the deadly grip  
Of desperate foes ;—thrilled my delighted sense  
More than the warm clasp of the whitest arms.  
So in my youth I followed with my sire  
To the king’s camp, when Aulus Plautius  
Assailed him with the veteran hosts of Gaul.  
For three stern years we strove, but strove in vain

To curb the conquests of the aliens ;  
And in the end they crushed us in the West,  
And made the land beyond the eastern streams  
A prey to rapine. In that third sad year  
I bore a message from Prince Owain,—son  
Of Brân, grandson of Llyr the gracious king,  
And elder brother of our Caradoc,—  
To his dark princess, Lady Guendolen :  
For whom and for their child the boding prince  
Had found a mountain refuge in the north,  
A June day's journey from the royal camp.  
Then first I learned that love is something more  
Than pleasure in a woman's loveliness.  
I saw among the maids of Guendolen  
One whose clear beauty was but as the veil  
That tempered down the shining of her soul.  
Straight my heart clave to her, and hers to me ;  
And when on the third day, my errand done,  
I slowly rode adown the winding vales,  
Lost in fond musings,—like a man possessed  
With some new life that almost slays the old,  
Yet makes him twenty-fold the man he was,—  
And sought Prince Owain in the royal camp,  
I asked of him the hand of Angharad,

She being an orphan, and he next of kin :  
He did not say me nay ; and all my heart  
Leapt onward to the happy time to come.

“ I could not speak of those delightful days  
Whose cruel sweetness only mocks me now,  
But that this languid pulse, slow settling down  
To an eternal stillness, cannot rise  
In dangerous throbs.

“ Moreover,” here he cast  
His looks on Julius, “ I have learned, though late,  
That the most vile, inexpiable wrong  
That ever yet was done by man to man,  
Shrinks into nothing by the monstrous growth  
Of that vast wrong he heaps upon himself,  
Who, wrenching off his soul from God and good,  
Sells her pure beauty to the vilest ends ;  
Whether revenge, or some yet viler end,  
If there be viler.”

At this Julius rose  
Astonished and transfigured by the light  
That flashed upon him. “ Can it be,” he said,  
“ That bitter utterance, which broke from me  
Before I was aware, and for the which  
How often have I fasted silently

And wept in secret, was the voice of God  
Unto thy soul ? Perchance 'tis often so :  
That the first impulse of a heart whereon  
His spirit broods, may lead a nearer way  
To His great ends than colder afterthoughts.  
But, I beseech thee, do not check thy tale."  
Then Cynfrán spoke again :—

“ The autumn came

And Llyr's last fight was fought ; the alien bands  
Slew or dispersed our hosts ; the ancient king  
Died broken-hearted, happier far than I  
Who lived to curse my life. The morrow morn  
I gathered from the forests and the wilds  
The scattered troops of Owain, who had fallen  
First in the battle, as he led the charge  
Of the scythed chariots on the Roman flank.  
And as with these I sought the mountain cell,  
My heart was heavy with the heavy news  
That must be borne to Lady Guendolen.  
But for myself!—Oh mortal blindness, cooped  
In a stone's throw of space, a point of time :—  
As for myself ! the bitterest of my grief  
Was that I did not grieve more bitterly.  
For evermore my untamed heart rebelled

Against the burden of the land undone,  
Against the burden of Prince Owain slain,  
And danced for rapture, thinking of my love.  
As one who gaily takes a poisoned cup,  
Unguessing at the fate that lurks within,  
And drinks a torturing death with nods and smiles,  
So as we neared the place, I spurred my horse  
Before the rest, eager for Angharad,  
And caring not that common eyes should note  
Our greetings :”—

Here he ceased, and slowly rose  
To his full height, and staggering to a seat  
In the far corner, sank down heavily ;  
Then spoke from out the darkness with a voice  
Half strangled, awful :—

“ ‘Twas a needless care :  
No light step flew to meet me : no shy arms  
Fell soft about my neck. But as my path  
Made its last turn, there, full before me, stood  
A wan and ghastly image ; with bright hair  
Blackened with blood ; with arms that thrust me back,  
As horror-struck I lighted from my horse ;  
And a changed voice, that uttered, ‘ Touch me not !  
For I am lost ;—ruined for evermore.

Ah ! would that thou hadst slain me with thy sword  
Ere thus I died to thee, died to myself,  
To all the fair earth and the pleasant skies.  
I have striven to take my life, here is the wound  
Deep in my temple, but my hand was weak.  
O Cynfrân ! I was blameless as the lamb  
In the wolf's jaws. But yet I cannot live,  
Cannot look on thee, never can be thine :  
All that has passed : the sweetness of our love  
Is drowned for ever in this bitter close.'  
Then sank she to the earth ; and as I strove  
To lift her, scarcely knowing what I did,—  
For right, and wrong, love, pity, and revenge  
Whirled in a mad confusion through my brain,—  
She snatched my sword, or ere I was aware,  
And fell upon the point, and so she died."

Here Cynfrân paused : while those two held their  
breath

In speechless awe and pity. For a space  
Nothing was heard except the sobbing flame,  
The mournful heaving of the tapestry,  
And far aloof within the midnight woods  
The howling of the wolves. He spoke again :  
" Then fearful darkness fell on me, through which

Shot gleams of light more fearful, for I learned  
By timid answers wrested from the troops,  
That some before they left the battle field,  
And some by flying rumours since the fight,  
Had gained the key to this black mystery.

They told that ' on the morning of the fight  
The Lady Guendolen,' (how bitterly  
I cursed her rashness !) ' left her mountain-cell  
Goaded by dark forebodings for her lord,  
And with her maidens came to watch the field :  
That on a knoll to rearward of our host  
They took their stand : that Guendolen ere long,  
Missing the glitter of Prince Owain's sword,  
Dashed down into the thickest of the fight : '—  
But here they checked themselves and cast seared  
looks  
Each on his fellow : looks that seemed to say  
' Tell *thou* the tale, I cannot.' But I urged  
And threatened, till they thrust a frightened boy  
To the front rank, who told me, stammering,  
' His mother was the nurse of Owain's child ;  
That he, her son, stood by her on the knoll :  
That when the Lady Guendolen sprang down  
Into the battle, she had flung the child

Into his mother's arms ; that afterwards—  
When the great legion, covered with locked shields,  
Rose like a huge sea-tortoise from its place  
And moved upon the ford, driving our troops  
To right and left, and slaying as it came—  
The frightened maidens, all save Angharad,  
Fled shrieking ; but she said she scorned to flee  
And leave her dearest lady succourless.  
Then up the valley came the roaring tide  
Of flying Cymri, driven before the foe,  
And all the knoll swarmed over, black and bright  
With the swart aliens and their flashing arms ;  
The air rang round with shrieks and mockery  
And he was trampled down and knew no more ;  
Save this ;—and here his boyish voice was choked  
With sobs and tears ;—‘ that now he sorely feared  
His mother must be slain ; for one had seen  
A Roman soldier bearing off the child,  
The little bright-haired Gladys, and he knew  
His mother ne'er had yielded up that child  
Save with her own last breath.’ ”

Here Cynfrân paused

Once more ; and when he spoke again, his voice  
Fell feebler yet :—

“ But I must hasten on ;  
For this strange strength which props my sinking frame  
Is but the ruddy gleam that flashes out  
From the wild sunset of a stormy day.  
My night is near ; yet not an endless night ;  
Beyond I see a calmer day-spring dawn.  
But help me now to lay my weary limbs  
Upon this bed of bracken.”

So they came,  
And laid him on the bracken, spreading out  
Their upper garments on his trembling frame,  
With tender hands ; then raised his sinking head  
And held the cup of cordial to his lips ;  
And as he drank thereof, his soul revived,  
So that he spoke again.

“ Within the cell  
We found the other maids of Guendolen,  
All scared and stricken by their fellow’s fate.  
Scared too by a weird vision they had seen  
Of Guendolen herself at earliest dawn,  
Stalking in dumb, unnoting misery  
Through all the chambers to an inner room,  
Where Angharad lay crouched : with whom she held  
A brief discourse ; and then with wilder looks

Rushed forth into the passes of the wood,  
Calling on Gladys ('twas her lost child's name),—  
On ' Gladys ! ' ' Gladys ! '—till her distant voice  
Died in the leafy depths, and all was still.

“ Upon a golden bier of autumn boughs  
We placed my Angharad. I would not let  
A hand except those virgin hands and mine  
Lay finger on her, nor would let an eye  
Gaze on her beauty, saving theirs and mine.  
How calm she lay ! all shame and bitterness  
Wiped from the solemn sweetness of her looks.  
Then ere we bare her out, adown her face  
We drew the shining veil of chestnut hair.  
With my own hands I dug her little grave  
In the pine grove where first we plighted troth,  
And there we left her. But before I turned  
To leave her grave, I wrung from out my heart  
The last slow drop of human kindness,  
(O God, forgive me !—yea, thou hast forgiven),  
And swore a fearful oath by the three Rays,—  
The sacred Rays that speak the unspoken Name,—  
Henceforth to live apart from all mankind ;  
To make my life one long revenge ; nor rest  
From that revenge until my life was done ;

To abjure the perils of the open fight  
And so to lengthen out that long revenge.

“ Thus through the nine brave years while Caradoc  
Repulsed the aliens, with a fiendish joy  
I wrought my will upon them, day by day  
Dooming my spirit to a deeper death.  
When Caradoc defeated and betrayed  
Was borne to Rome, I made my secret haunt  
Within this summer palace of the king,  
Hence only issuing forth as a wild beast  
To seek his prey. And so the years went on,  
Each darker than the last ; for the high God  
Was slowly wreaking out his vast revenge  
Upon me ; that revenge, which as thou saidst,  
Is love and pity.

“ But there came a day  
When from the cliffs above the tawny sea  
I watched an alien vessel in the bay,  
With hatred in my heart, and fierce desire  
That craved the more the more I pampered it  
With foul and cruel deeds. I saw you land ;  
Judged you were Romans ; tracked your steps until  
We met upon the marsh ;—the rest you know.  
Thy stern rebuke like midnight lightning lit

My darkened heart, and showed me to myself ;  
And loathing all things, and myself the most,  
I sought my solitary lair again ;  
There evermore I struggled to forget ;  
But evermore came sounding in my ears  
That stern rebuke. And evermore my soul  
Reproached me with the vast and cruel wrong  
Of selling her pure beauty to revenge,  
And making her the shrinking paramour  
Of all she loathed the most. And evermore  
I strove to struggle forward to the light  
And see the face of God ; but could not go :  
A thousand dark suggestions plucked me back.  
And in those days the Druids of the land,  
As now, were prisoned in the sacred Isle,  
So there was none to guide.

“ Then I recalled

A tale, which lightly heard in happier times,  
Had lain as dead within my memory,  
But now, requickened by occasion, rose  
Alive with meaning. 'Twas a Druid's tale,  
A legend from that far-off Indian clime  
Which sages say lies in the utmost East,  
Beyond the sunrise of the sunrise land.

It told of a fierce man of many sins  
Who, when his sins had grown and multiplied,  
And turned upon him like a troop of wolves,  
Rending his soul, until he cried aloud  
To God and man for help,—but there was none,—  
Had met with one who bade him make his home  
Within some drear and solitary place,  
And there subdue himself with toilsome days  
And sleepless nights ; to seek no grateful shade  
From the hot sun of summer, neither fire  
In the keen cold of winter ; to abuse  
His palate with all bitter meats and drinks,  
And these in scanty measure. Farther yet ;  
To scourge his shrinking flesh, and, if needs be,  
Thrust cruel hooks through all his quivering limbs ;  
That so the sin which loves an easy home  
Should find no rest in him. All this I did :  
My strength would fail me now to utter half  
The torments that I gathered to myself  
With greedy hands, and bore without a groan ;  
Witness these scarred limbs, and this wasted frame  
Dying untimely. But 'twas all in vain ;  
For while I slew the sin upon the right,  
Upon the left the unslain self arose,

More vigorous than before. I could not lift  
Myself above myself. And evermore,  
As thus I vainly strove, the thicker grew  
The veil upon my heart, and farther off  
Glimmered the awful face of the Unseen.  
And evermore a colder horror crept  
Through all my spirit, as the fear of fears  
Drew closer, showing ghastlier lineaments.  
The fear that death instead of leading me  
To the calm circle of eternal bliss  
Would plunge me deep within the lowest sphere.  
Penning my wretched soul within the husk  
Of some brute form, to expiate my sin.

“ So passed the miserable years, until  
This harvest gilt the valleys ; and I heard,  
Far off, as one entombed alive might hear,  
The voices of the reapers, and the songs  
Of happy maidens binding up the sheaves.  
Then did a subtle fever creep within  
My almost empty veins, and the thin blood  
Rose in a steamy cloud, and dimmed my brain ;  
While mortal heaviness that was not sleep  
Glued down my burning limbs. Time passed no more  
On those alternate steps of night and day

Which freshen even misery, but writhed  
In hideous indistinguishable length.  
Thus had I lain—how long I know not—when  
I heard a rustling sound within the room,  
Which moved a wish in me to ope mine eyes,  
Had not the weight of mountains held the lids.  
Then cooling moisture touched my lips, a draught  
Of blessed water met my parching thirst,  
And a man's voice spake kindly ; but my voice  
Refused to answer, as my eyes to look :  
For all my vital force had sunk as low  
As the last drop within a wasted well.  
Yet over all my heart a still content  
Spread at that voice.

“ Strength fails me now to tell  
Of all his patient watching by my bed ;  
Of all the tender offices of love,  
Hard for a man to show to a dear friend,  
In which he spent himself unsparingly  
On me, a stranger. After many days  
The fever left me ; and I woke from sleep  
Like a new man, yet feeble as a babe.  
Then first I saw him plainly ; for before,  
'Twas a dim dream, in which a hand, a face,

A robe of many colours, moved obscure  
Among the visions of my wavering brain.  
He was a graceful youth, clad like the youths  
Who learn the subtle mysteries of the bards ;  
And with a face as clear as summer skies.  
He told me how that journeying down the glen  
He chanceed upon this place, and found me laid  
Sick unto death ; and so had staid awhile  
To tend me in that sickness : making light  
Of his great service.

“ As he moved about  
With noiseless steps, and watched for every wish,  
And day by day, unwearied, sought abroad  
Among the flocks gone wild among the hills,  
And in the garden, choked with rankest weeds,  
For all I needed, how my heart upswelled  
With wonder at the patience of his love !  
And when at length I found a feeble voice  
This wonder reached my lips, and, ‘ Oh,’ I sighed,  
‘ Would that the great Unseen, Unsearchable,  
Would have compassion on my soul, as thou  
Hast had upon my body ! ’

“ ‘ Then,’ said he,  
‘ Thou hast thy wish. The pity I have shown<sup>^</sup>

Is but a spark enkindled by the flame  
Of His compassion.'

“ So he spake, and drew  
My sad tale from me, till I told him all ;  
Told of the bitter blighting of my youth ;  
Of the vile vow kept but too well ; of how  
Your words had burnt asunder like a flame  
The bondage of that vow ; yet left me bound  
In thraldom full as hopeless though less vile.  
At that a glow of glad astonishment  
Flushed all his face, as thus he answered me :—

“ ‘ Now God be thanked. These are the very men  
From whom I learned the things that set me free.  
They taught me that the great Unsearchable ;—  
He whom the Druids name not ; who they say  
Dwells inapproachable, immovable,  
Far off among the vast eternities,  
Shut in serene self-glory, heeding not  
Our sighing waves that break about His feet ;  
Or, at the best, as elder sages taught,  
Whose boundless being is the sea whereon  
The transient ripples of our lives arise,  
In which they sink, unknowing and unknown :—  
That He is Father of the souls of men ;

As much, yea more a thousand, thousand fold  
Than earthly sires are fathers of our flesh ;  
And as a father pities us. That still,  
As earthly sires who wisely love their sons  
Will seek for them a strenuous discipline  
To mould the plastic mind and stubborn will ;  
So has the Heavenly Parent built for us  
This schoolhouse of the world, wherein to learn  
The long laborious lessons framed to fit  
Our inner manhood for the life beyond.  
Nor this alone ; but that a blessed One,  
Visible image of the unseen God,  
Had late, within the memory of man,  
Been born, and lived, and died upon the earth  
To show these things. That now the time was passed  
For gifts of pain, and sacrifice of blood,  
Since all men in His gift and sacrifice  
Were gathered homeward to our Father's heart,  
If so we willed it.'

“ Thus he spake, and more.

I cannot set it forth in ordered words ;  
I cannot trace the way it wrought on me ;  
I only know that all my fetters fell ;  
That while my spirit slept the sleep of death,

And only saw wild phantoms, only felt  
A freezing nightmare holding me from God,  
His eye was resting on me. And at length,—  
As when a watcher bends a steadfast gaze  
Upon the close-locked lids of one that sleeps,  
His gaze awakes the sleeper,—so beneath  
The Eye of love that lights the unseen world,  
My wondering spirit woke from death to life."

Then said the Maccabee, " Let God be thanked.  
But where is Llarian ? he who succoured thee ? "

And Cynfrân answered. " When my sickness turned  
He went his way along the downward vale ;  
For he was bent to find you, and had gone  
Upon your track in vain for many a moon.  
But on the third day after that on which  
I watched his many-coloured robe grow dim  
Within the woods, my sickness came again.  
Again the subtle fever crept within  
My almost empty veins ; again the blood  
Rose in a steamy cloud and dimmed my brain.  
Then driven by raging thirst, I staggered forth,—  
But all was like a dream, a feverish dream,—  
To seek the coolness of the stream below."

With that he closed his eyes ; and turned his face

To the blank wall, and said, “ I can no more ;—  
I weary to the death and fain would sleep.  
The burning pain has left me. Yea, who knows  
But that I yet may live ? Well, life is sweet,  
And what an altered thing would life be now.”

And so he murmured till he slept. All night  
The pilgrims watched alternate by his bed ;  
And when his spirit stirred in sleep, the sense  
Went wandering back to times long passed away.  
As reliques of a wreck which after-storms  
Wash on the shore, the fragments of the past  
Came sadly into sight. Again he rode,  
Lost in fond musings, down the winding vales ;  
Again he seemed to talk with Angharad.  
Her name returned for ever to his lips  
And dwelt upon them, like the sweetest phrase  
Of some old melody. So went the night ;  
But when the day began to break, they saw  
A solemn and unutterable change.  
No sunrise could uplift the leaden veil  
That masked his features. Then they thought,—  
‘ perchance  
His soul has passed ;’—and touched him ; but at that  
He slowly opened eyes in which the light

Was quenched for ever ; made a feeble sign  
That they should raise him ; and when this was done  
Lay leaning upon Julius' breast, his arms  
Drooping on either side, as droop the boughs  
Of blasted trees. Then,—in an altered voice,  
Whose plaintive hoarseness seemed the pining ghost  
Of the deep tones of other days,—he said—  
“ Last night I thought, or dreamed I thought, per-  
chance  
I yet might live. That thought is gone : and gone  
The wish that gave it birth. For now I know  
Such lives as mine are like to precious drops  
Spilled on the ground : they mock recovery.  
But in my heart of hearts a surer hope  
Takes root among the ruins of the past.  
The Hand that made me will not cast me off ;  
The Love that through my darkest wanderings,  
When least I dreamed of it and least desired,  
Has followed me with whispers in the soul,  
With touches reaching from the outer life,  
Will follow still, beyond the unpierced dark  
That fronts me now with scarce a step between.”

He paused ; and even the Maccabee himself  
Felt hands of silence laid upon his lips :

Yet an officious conscience,—prone to think  
We do God service when we violate  
The heart's fine instincts,—forced him into speech :  
So with constrained voice and disordered looks  
That showed the lack of inward harmony,  
He spoke abruptly to the dying man :—  
“ Nay, friend, not so, there is no after-chance ;  
Lose the soul here and all is lost beyond,  
But save it here, and all the life is saved :”  
And would have babbled more ;—but Julius laid  
A warning finger on his lifted arm,  
Saying :—

“ And canst thou not entrust this soul  
To Him who died to win it ? He has dealt  
In secret with it, whispering as of old  
To those that were the closest to his heart,  
‘ Lo ! I have many things to say to you,  
But now ye cannot bear them.’ Yet there comes  
A pentecost to every waiting soul,  
And therefore, soon or late, or here or there,  
It comes to him.”

Meanwhile, the dying man  
Heard not nor heeded ; but with radiant smiles,  
Shed forth on that which seemed but empty air,

Looked out beyond them ; slowly raised his hand  
As one who waves a signal to a friend,  
And called aloud :—“ I come ! ” Then the hand fell,  
The head sank forward, and the feeble breaths  
Came feebler yet and farther each from each,  
Till one as gentle as an infant’s sigh  
On which none other followed.

In that hour  
The liquid sunrise, dropped through dewy trees,  
Fell by the ruined casement to the floor ;  
And rested on the russet couch, and reached  
The shrunk and colourless hand, and wove a crown  
Of flickering rays about the faded brow.  
Amidst the utter stillness of the room  
They heard the soft sounds of the waking woods,—  
The insects’ hum, the small birds’ twittering,—  
Nearer and clearer ; till at last a lark,  
Pierced to the heart with joy, sprang from the grass  
Of the neglected plot, and poured his soul  
In floods of music, rising as he sung  
Higher and higher in the brightening heavens.

Now when a second evening gilt the woods  
And painted clouds were glassed within the stream.  
The pilgrims who had toiled all day to fit

The ruined lodge to hold its royal guests,  
Flung their tired limbs upon the grassy bank  
Beside the ford. But scarce the Maccabee  
Had lain a moment, scarce had time to note  
How motionless the birch-sprays' tracery hung  
Against the amber sky, when such a flood  
Of fearful rapture,—held in check awhile  
By strenuous toil and death's stern presence,—rushed  
Into his heart, he leapt upon his feet,  
Saying within himself:—‘ This very eve,  
Perchance this very hour ! O perilous joy,  
Whose cup uplifted to my thirsty lips,  
May yet be spilled untasted ! ’ At that thought  
He turned a troubled face upon his friend,  
Crying :—“ My father, all my heart is torn  
With cruel fears ; call thou aloud on God.”

Then instantly the soul of Julius  
Girt up her loins to climb the shining steps  
Let down from heaven to earth. And as she rose  
His worn-out bodily frame arose with her,  
Unconsciously uplifted by her strength.  
And when he ceased a calm ineffable  
Sank on the Maccabee ; and in his soul  
He set his seal to this : that God is true

And all-sufficing ; that come joy, come woe,  
All shall be well ; well in the after-world  
If evil here : well in the after-time  
If evil now.

But ere the sun's last smile  
Had faded from the topmost eastern ridge,  
The sound of steps and voices in the glen  
Greeted the pilgrims' ears. And as they rose  
Trembling with eagerness, the king appeared,  
Striding before his kin and followers  
To front the edge of danger. Then they ran  
To meet him, and the aged Julius bent  
To kiss the faded border of his robe ;  
But Caradoc, whose stern, still reticence,  
Shaken by many sorrows, now dissolved  
In nameless pangs at sight of a friend's face,  
Caught him in troubled silence to his breast ;  
Then, loosening his grasp, cried,—

“ Pardon ! O my friend  
If at this hour of meeting, after years  
Of woful exile on my part, on thine  
Of toils untold, I speak but moodily.  
God knows I am not thankless for His gifts :  
Liberty, safe return with all I love

To my own land, and such a friend as thou  
Restored to me: and most of all, the gift  
Too priceless to be named with even these:  
Acquaintance with Himself, which should bring  
peace,

And does in part. Yet bitter 'tis and strange,  
That here upon the dear soil for the which  
My fathers bled, and over which they held  
A sway at least more righteous than the sway  
Of other kings, their son should stand unknown,  
Unrecked of, unlamented, undesired.

Here through this central fortress of our tribe,—  
The tribe which hailed me sovereign, with a shout  
That shook the Cæsars from their purple rest  
Far off in Rome; which for nine glorious years  
I led from victory to victory,  
Until we hurled the veteran legions back  
Beyond the Sabren and the tawny sea;—  
Here, through Siluria, these three desolate days,  
I pass, the aim of every curious eye,  
Yet not a soul has greeted me but thou,  
And thou an alien. No, I have not found one  
That had the grace, remembering Caradoc,  
To pause and look upon me with a sigh,

As if he thought :—‘ This squalid wayfarer  
Is like the King ; or would be like the King  
But for the mighty difference.’ No, not one !  
I am as much forgotten as the dead ;  
Nay, more forgotten. Peace, I know full well  
All thou wouldest say : how I commanded you,—  
By that great oath I swore unwillingly  
Before the hateful city of the south  
Opened her gates to set me free, and which  
Though sworn unwillingly must still be kept,  
Because, if Rome be faithless, God is true  
And hates a lie ;—ye should not spread the fame  
Of this my coming, lest the faithful few  
That still have held their fealty should arise  
To greet me as their king, and shed their blood  
For that which cannot be. I might have spared  
Such fine, fantastic scruples.’

Here he laughed,  
A dry, self-scorning laugh :—“ Why, I have been  
As simple as a maid ; who, honest soul,—  
A little vain but honest,—fears to spoil  
The peace of some forbidden lover, and so  
Weaves many a subtle, self-deceiving plot  
To shun him, or greet coldly. While his heart

Is all the while freer by half than hers,  
Which bleeds in secret at the chilling change.  
Yea, I did charge you thus, and would again,  
And mean it from my heart. But ah ! my friend,  
'Tis easier to deny a lover's prayer  
Than rest contented when the faithless lips  
That framed it have forgot their own desire.

“ But shame upon the selfish heart that broods  
On its own griefs in such an hour as this.  
Behind me come my father and my queen,  
The spouse and children of the Maccabee,  
With faithful friends and servants who have shared  
Our exiled fortunes. Eirgen and her lord  
Have taken second shipping at the port  
Of Venta, thence to cross the tawny sea  
To Avon and the City of the Cleft ;  
So by the healing Waters of the Sun  
To Sarrlug town beside the hanging stones,  
Where lie his lands.”

Then Julius, seeing the king  
Answered himself, and turned to other themes,  
Forbore to answer him. And Caradoc  
Passed onwards to the ford, a lonely man,  
With self but half subdued. And as he went

He waved a stately hand to Julius  
To leave him and to meet the prince and queen.  
And soon those frosty-haired, dry-wrinkled men,  
Prince Brán and Julius, on each other's necks  
Fell with right joyful greetings. For their hearts,  
Kept fresh by sap of generous sympathies,  
Were in mid-summer still. And Julius kissed  
The hem of the Queen's robe, the sad-faced Queen ;  
Who, worn with exile and the many woes  
Which falling on the head of him she loved  
Descended with a double weight on hers,  
And wearied with rough journeying, had scarce  
The life left in her that could frame a smile.

Meanwhile the Maceabee had hastened forth  
To welcome his dear spouse and tender babes.  
Deep in the wood he met with Miriam.  
Then dumb at first even with excess of bliss  
They hung upon each other's quivering lips.  
Next, held apart the length of loving arms,  
Gazed each on each, half doubtfully ; the while  
Strange, painful laughter, mixed with painless tears,  
Shook all their unnerved features. Till the babes,  
Half shy, half jealous, only half assured,  
Thrust their small hands into their mother's hands.

Then the vague rapture inexpressible  
Found voice and action ; as the mother held  
The doubtful boy in reassuring arms,  
And made him know his father ; who the while  
Crushed all his dusky curls caressingly  
With his large hand, and looked him in the face  
With gentleness ineffable, and smoothed  
And lessened the deep rolling of his voice  
To suit his shaken spirits. While the girl,  
One hand still clinging to her mother's robe,  
Ventured the other in the broad brown palm  
That courted its caress : then as if nerved  
By its firm pressure, stood erect and raised  
Her soft lips to the stranger's bearded mouth,  
Sealing the triple bond that binds the world.

So passed they with their followers to the ford.  
But Julius lingered, thinking in himself,  
“ Ah, wherefore did I let a casual word  
Tempt me to long for that which cannot be.”

But as he thought he lifted mournful eyes,  
And saw—was it a dream ?—or did he see  
A maiden standing where the path emerged  
From the thick wood ? As motionless she stood  
As any statue, gazing at the fall.

Then Julius stammered in his very thoughts—  
Thinking :—‘ How like,—yet ah ! the difference !  
This is a woman, and my Claudia  
Is but a child, a simple, slender child.’  
But as he thought, and stammered in his thoughts,  
She turned and saw him, and a rosy dawn  
Of recognition overflowed her face,—  
Her rare, sweet face ;—and forth she flew to him,  
Embraced his hand and laid it on her head,  
Crying :—“ My father Julius !”

Then he wept

For joy and gratitude, and clasped her hands  
Within his own, and gazed upon her face  
To find the little Claudia of old times  
In this fair woman. So with trembling lips  
Thanked God between his tears ; and when at length  
He found a settled voice, inquired of her  
How this great wonder might have come to pass.

Then in a chastened voice she answered him,—  
“ Alas ! my father, 'tis a weary tale :  
Let this suffice thee. In these five long years  
Have I been learning that my direst foes  
Are those of my own house. I do not speak  
Of Plautius,—God forgive him,—but of things

In my own bosom : subtle enemies  
That lurk within the heart, and clothe themselves  
With light like angels. I have been sore bestead ;  
My steps have well nigh slipped ; but the kind Christ  
Has still upheld my weakness. When the foe  
Has pressed the closest, He was closer still  
And stronger than the strongest. He has sent  
His ministering spirits, oftentimes unseen  
But often seen, and clothed in flesh and blood,  
To succour me when ready to despair.

The chief of these has been the noble Brân,  
Whom on the fatal day of massacre  
I saw with thee. Again, and yet again,  
His keen-eyed watchfulness has found the net  
Spread for my feet, and by a timely word,  
Or secret sign, has saved me. God be thanked !

At length Pomponia, mother of my love,  
Hearing a rumour that the prince and king  
Were set at large on oath of fealty,  
And would return to Britain, urged on me  
(Speaking in secret by my faithful nurse)  
To leave the wicked city, and with them  
Sail to the land I loved, the land whose name  
Was graven on my heart. So after strife

Of sore conflicting thoughts, yearnings of heart  
Which only He that made me comprehends,  
I saw the path where He would have me go ;  
And here, in mine own land, with His good help,  
Will I be His more fully ; spend myself,—  
Yea and be spent, when my reluctant soul  
Hangs back from sacrifice,—for those He loves.”

While thus she spake they reached the ford, o'er  
which

The faithful servants following the king  
Had laid a rugged bridge of boughs fresh hewn,  
That the faint queen and Miriam and her babes  
Might pass dry shod. And Claudia ceased to speak,  
And looked around bewildered : to the fall  
That poured from the high cliff, and to the pool,  
And to the woods above. Till Julius said,  
“ What has amazed thee, daughter ? ” To the which  
She answered :—

“ 'Tis most strange. As even now  
Through the arched woodland path I saw beyond  
The silver-flashing fall, it seemed to me  
A most familiar thing ; and now again  
That strange, mysterious sense of new, yet old,  
At once disturbs and calms me. Either in,

Or severed from the body, I have seen  
This place before ; but whether in a dream,  
Or in the waking world, I cannot tell.”

Then Julius, marvelling, held his peace. And while  
It seemed to her he thought of other things,  
His fancy,—like the hoar-frost shooting through  
The scattered moisture and congealing it  
Into symmetrical, articulate forms,—  
Arranged her fragmentary memories  
With other fragments caught from other lives,  
Till in a perfect whole they crystallized  
On the transparent surface of his mind.

Thus speaking, silent thus, they crossed the stream,  
And climbed the heights, and gained the ruined lodge.  
There as they entered, stood the prince and king,  
Gazing with speechless pity in their eyes  
Upon the dead, the while the Maccabee  
Rehearsed his dolorous tale. To tender hearts  
All bitter things, though past, are bitter still ;  
And sorrow sorrowful, ev'n when assuaged  
For evermore.

Upon the morrow morn  
The pilgrims hollowed his sequestered grave  
Above the sounding fall. And round the grave

Arose the chaunt of many voices blent  
In psalms of praise for his deliverance.

Now on that day on which the pilgrims left  
The herdsman's hut, the heart of Guendolen  
Could find no rest. Some power within her seemed  
To urge her to go forth and follow them.  
Therefore when on the morrow Llarian came,  
Full bent to find them, straightway she arose  
And claimed his guidance. With a reverent hand  
He led her forth, and through the woodland wilds  
Retraced his steps. Four days they journeyed thus  
By gentle stages, and on the fifth morn  
Entered the glen where the white torrent poured  
Through tumbled rocks. And when the sun rode high,  
Crossing the ford, they heard the funeral psalm  
Ring through the woods above, blent with the roar  
Of falling waters. Nearer drawn, one voice  
Soared in sweet shrillness high above the rest.  
Then in the shadowed border of the wood  
They checked their steps, until the latest note  
Died on the air.

Then Guendolen went forth,  
Calmly as one who takes expected bliss,  
And gathered Claudio closely to her heart,

And claimed her as her child and Owain's child,  
Saying,—“ I need no proof: thy eyes are his,  
And all thy bright face and thy golden hair  
Are his, my Owain's. Here we dwelt in peace  
Before the rising of the Cymric tribes,  
And here, 'twas shown me, we should meet again.  
Upon the level turf beside the ford  
Thy tender feet first tottered off alone,  
Lured by some sunlit flower, and here thy hand  
Shall stay my feet when tottering to the grave.  
And when long centuries have rolled away,  
This waterfall, my Gladys, shall be called  
Still by thy name.” “

And in those days she fell  
Into a trance, and saw with opened eyes  
The visions of the future. And she said,—  
“ When three-score generations shall have slipped  
Into the life unseen, whose waters wide  
Sweep round the life we see ;—when this new faith,  
Old as the sun, yet new as is the dawn,  
Has mastered all the masters of the world ;—  
When lightened by its light the eye of man  
Begins to spell the universe and solve  
Its secret mysteries ;—when having drawn

The wisdom of high Heaven into his heart  
Even with his mother's milk ; yea, long before,  
Through countless veins of custom and descent,—  
He turns and plumes himself thereon, as if  
All were his own, himself the source of all,  
And whispers to his own proud heart,—‘ Behold  
Thou art my God, and there is none beside.’  
Yea, even then, the memory of my child  
Shall still be blessed in Britain.”

Thus the lodge  
Become the peaceful homestead of the prince,  
The king, the queen, the widowed Guendolen,  
And Claudia, darling of their fallen house.  
Beside the knoll where first the pilgrims found  
The lady Guendolen, the prince upreared  
A temple to the living God, the first  
That ever rose in Britain. Thither too  
Came many bards and bardic novices,  
Drawn from the sacred isle by Llarian's fame,  
To sit at Julius' feet and learn from him  
The worship of the living God, and pass  
Through mystic waters to the side of Christ ;  
To lead new lives of holy thoughts and deeds,  
And solemn prayers and praises : so the place

Is called *the Church of Ilid* to this day.  
And hard beside the church, the Maccabee  
Dwelt with his dark-eyed Miriam ; and their house  
Grew bright with children's beauty, musical  
With children's voices ; while he went and came  
Leading a pastoral life among the flock  
Brought homewards from the heathen wilderness.

But as for Clandia :—how she kept her vow  
Of service to her Lord :—whether apart  
From tenderer earthly ties she followed close  
Behind His bleeding feet, alone like Him ;—  
Or whether bent beneath a homelier cross  
She moved in lower paths, and daily died  
In daily discipline of household cares,  
Sweetened by love whose sweetness symbols His ;—  
We know not : only knowing that her name,  
Embalmed by purest saintship, lingers still  
In old traditions as a blessed name.  
Her tale is told : the legendary spring  
That trickled from the summits of the past  
Has poured its little urn, and all is still.

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